Buffy the Vampire Slayer™

JOSS WHEDON
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SCOTT ALLIE JANE ESPENSON KARL MOLINE CLIFF RICHARDS

SEASON 9 VOLUME 1

THE WORLD'S CONNECTION TO MAGIC HAS BEEN LOST, AND BUFFY IS TO BLAME.

Following the tragic events of Season 8—where one of Buffy's closest allies was lost, and another estranged—the Slayer finds herself in a new city struggling like any twenty-something might to pay rent, make (and keep) friends, and atone for all her misdeeds.

Problems plague the Slayer, and she turns to a longtime confidant, Spike, for help when she's forced to make a choice that could forever alter the course of her life. Together they tackle the increasing zompire population, their misguided friend Andrew, a rogue Slayer out for blood, and finally, Buffy's continually complicated and more-dangerous-than-ever personal life.

Welcome to San Francisco, home of the Golden Gate Bridge and Alcatraz, where Buffy finds herself more alone than she's ever been and more important than ever in the fight against the forces of evil!

"Even if Buffy's life has gotten much smaller, the world remains a big place, and it's always spinning forward . . . As any *Buffy* fan knows, the woman is plenty captivating just on her own."

—*ENTERTAINMENT WEEKLY*

"Joss Whedon has managed the impossible yet again, somehow reinventing and reinvigorating these beloved characters and putting them on entirely new paths and adventures. I cannot wait to see where Whedon is taking us this time."

—COMIC BOOK RESOURCES

DARK HORSE BOOKS

Buffy
the Vampire Slayer™

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DARK HORSE BOOKS

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I THINK KING SPIKE IS IMPRESSED BY OUR PURSUIT OF THE CREATURE.

WE'RE SHOWING OFF OUR FASTEST SETTING.

I LAID OUT OUR PURSUIT PLAN FOR KING SPIKE.

FOR THE FIRST TWENTY-HOUR PERIOD, WE EXHAUST THE CREATURE THROUGH PURSUIT.

FOR THE SECOND TWENTY-HOUR PERIOD, WE OBSERVE IT FOR SIGNS OF EXHAUSTION. DURING THE THIRD TWENTY-HOUR PERIOD--

HOW MANY HOURS IS THIS PLAN, THEN?

ABOUT ONE AND A HALF THOUSAND.

AHHHGH! SO...WE DON'T HAVE GUNS? MISSILES? PHOTON TORPEDOES?

THERE! I SEE THE CONTROL!

THAT IS NOT THE CONTROL FOR A STANDARD GUN.

BLUMP

BAM

THE KING IS A GOOD SHOT.

I DIDN'T HURT IT?

THAT WAS A DEVICE FOR IMPREGNATING SPACE WHALES. ITS POTENTIAL EFFECT ON THIS CREATURE IS UNKNOWN.

OH.

SSSS

PING

OOF

PPPPPFT

BRAAAP

MAGICAL MYSTERY TOUR

FEATURING THE BEETLES

HOORAY!

CLOSING INTAKE VACUUMS.

LITTLE LATE.

I HAVE AN ANNOUNCEMENT TO MAKE.

YOU--POOR ORPHANED CREW OF THE UNPRONOUNCEABLE--YOU BROUGHT ME ONBOARD IN HOPES THAT TOGETHER WE COULD FIND YOUR PURPOSE.

WELL, I HAVE FOUND IT!

YOUR PURPOSE IS TO RETURN ME TO EARTH AS SOON AS POSSIBLE AND LEAVE ME THERE!

OUR SPEED DRIVE WAS DAMAGED BY THE STICKY FLUID. WE WILL NEED ONE AND A HALF THOUSAND HOURS TO GET YOU BACK HOME.

SPIKE! SPIKE!

KING SPIKE IS PLEASED.

SPIKE! SPIKE!

HERE IS WHAT I NEED TO SURVIVE ON THIS SHIP FOR A THOUSAND AND A HALF HOURS. ONE--*TREAT THESE SODDIN' BURNS. I SMELL LIKE A CHOP SHOP.* TWO--A SMOKING SECTION. THREE--I HAVE TO TALK TO SOMEONE ABOUT THE TOILET. FOUR--I'D LIKE A DRINK. FIVE--I WANT ONE OF THOSE ARMORED PRESSURE SUITS.

SIX--WHAT IS *THAT?*

LOSS OF A LEG IS A FAIRLY COMMON MINOR INJURY. WE PUT THE LEGS IN THE CORNER. IT JUST SEEMS WRONG TO TOSS THEM OUT--

SEVEN--I'M GOING TO NEED A LARGE NOVELTY CALENDAR WHERE I CAN MARK OFF DAYS.

ONLY A WEEK DOWN AND I ALREADY FEEL THE TICKLING OF OTHER VOICES IN THE CORNERS OF MY EYES.

OH, DRU, IS THIS WHAT IT WAS LIKE INSIDE YOUR BEAUTIFUL HEAD?

OK!

BUG ONE, I HAVE TO FIND A WAY TO LIVE HERE. THINGS ARE GOING TO CHANGE.

AND SO THINGS CHANGE...

8

KING SPIKE HONORS EACH OF US WITH OUR OWN EARTH-STYLE NAME.

PAOLO, ELIZABETH, FRISKY, BUB, LESTER, JUMPY, FIDO, IRENE, SPOTTY, AND RICK.

I AM NOW KNOWN AS IRENE.

11

HE BECOMES FAMILIAR WITH OUR CULTURE. HE ENJOYS "LOVE COMES ON LEATHERY WINGS."

HE SEES THE UNIVERSE THROUGH OUR EYES.

FALLING OVER... FALLING!

18

...MY HEART EXPANDS, 'TIS GROWN A BULGE IN IT...

...AND WHEN THE WIND BLOWS, THE CRADLE WILL ROCK...

THE GRUBS LOVE HIM.

HE READS US BEAUTIFUL VERSES.

HE HELPS OUT IN THE NURSERY.

26

HE DECORATES HIS QUARTERS.

WHEN WE MEET UP WITH AN EXOTIC VESSEL, HE CHAPERONES THE DANCE.

33

HE DEVELOPS A FITNESS ROUTINE.

59

THAT'S ENOUGH FROM YOU, ELIZABETH!

HE DEALS WITH A BACKSTABBING COLLEAGUE.

HE EVEN PARTICIPATES IN OUR MOST CHERISHED CEREMONIES.

DO YOU, RICK AND LESTER AND FIDO, PROMISE...

BUT EVENTUALLY, HIS HOME IS IN SIGHT AGAIN AND WE PREPARE TO SAY GOODBYE...

62

BUGGER OFF!

WOW. CAN'T BELIEVE *THAT* HASN'T COME UP BEFORE.

WHERE'VE YOU BEEN?

I WOULD LIKE TO BORROW A TOOTHBRUSH.

SO YOU'RE HOME FOR GOOD NOW?

NAH. JUST PICKING UP A PIZZA, CHANGE O' UNDERWEAR, YOU KNOW. THEY'LL WAIT FOR ME.

END

GOD...

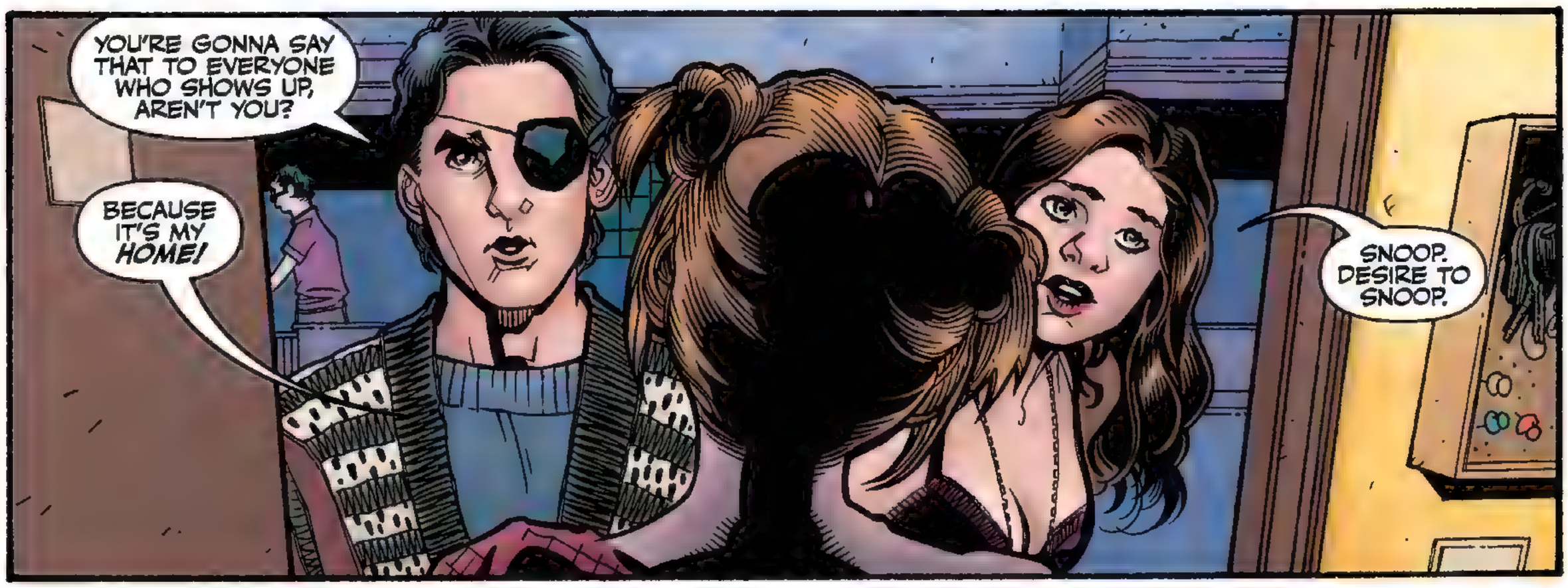
...WHAT HAVE I DONE?

ALSO, WHY DID I DO WHATEVER IT WAS I'VE DONE?

ALSO, WHERE AM I?

HONEY, I'M HO-OOME!

FREEFALL


YOU'RE GONNA SAY THAT TO EVERYONE WHO SHOWS UP, AREN'T YOU?
BECAUSE IT'S MY HOME!
SNOOP. DESIRE TO SNOOP.

COATS

MORE IMPORTANTLY, IT'S NOT *YOUR* HOME.

OUR COUCH MISSES YOU ALREADY.

WE DON'T, BUT...

SHUT UP AND MEET THE ROOMIES.

THE LITTLE ONE'S *ANAHEED*...

HEY!

...AND THE NOT-GETTING-UP ONE'S *TUMBLE*.

HEY.

DAWN. XANDER.

THE SISTER! WOULD YOU GUYS LIKE SOMETHING TO DRINK?

NO, WE WANNA FEEL THIS AWKWARD ALL NIGHT.

THERE'S BEER IN THE BUCKET, AND I MADE A PUNCH THAT IS BOTH FRUITY AND DANGEROUS.

NOT UNLIKE MYSELF.

SO, ARE YOU GUYS SWEETIES?

ME AND TUMBLE? JUST BUDS.

AND HIS NAME'S REALLY "TUMBLE"?

THANKS FOR BEING FIRST. I KNOW YOU HATE BEING FIRST. YOU WANNA SEE MY BEDROOM?

MATURITY CAUSES ME NOT TO JOKE AT THIS POINT. PLEASE NOTE THE TIME AND DATE.

NOTED, DATED.

KNOCK KNOCK...

WHO'S...

...THERE...

OH GOOD.

WE'RE NOT FIRST.

PRESTO CHANGE-O.

HEY CUTIE.

HOW'S IT HANGING OVER?

WILLOW? AM I--DID WE--

DID WE MAKE A NAUGHTY?

THE MOST IMPORTANT NIGHT OF MY LIFE AND YOU DON'T REMEMBER.

NO, I, DO, I...

PLEASE. I JUST STOPPED BY TO MAKE SURE YOU WEREN'T DEAD.

AND USE YOUR SHOWER, 'CAUSE I SNUCK OUT ON AURA AND I'M NEAR WORK. HOW ARE YOU DOING?

MY BRAIN IS SWOLLEN.

YOU BROUGHT THE *HOUSE* DOWN LAST NIGHT, WILD THING.

WAS IT AWFUL?

IT WAS ADORABLE. AT LEAST THE PARTS I SAW--I LOST YOU FOR A WHILE.

MY LIMBS FEEL SCREWED ON WRONG.

WATER. THEN COFFEE, IF YOU CAN KEEP IT DOWN, THEN MORE WATER.

I TASTE LIKE FACE.

AND ASPIRIN IN BUNCHES. YOU'LL BE RIGHT AS RAIN IN NO TIME LESS THAN FOUR DAYS.

CAN'T YOU JUST DO A SPELL?

OOPS.

SORRY.

THIS IS PROBABLY MY KARMA, RIGHT? FOR MAKING ALL THE MAGIC GO AWAY.

THAT'S PAINTING IT A BIT BLACK, BUFF.

BUT THESE THINGS DO CATCH UP WITH YOU.

I'M NOT THE ONLY ONE WHOSE POWERS ARE GONE...

YOU'RE HURTING MY HAIR.

"...EVERYONE'S FEELING SOME LOSS."

SHE'S BEAUTIFUL.

YEAH, THAT'S JUST ABOUT THE CREEPIEST THING YOU COULD SAY RIGHT NOW.

I'M SORRY. I JUST DIDN'T EXPECT...

I'VE BEEN PREPPING MYSELF NOT TO BE THE ROOKIE AND GET GROSSED OUT, BUT...

...THERE'S NOTHING GROSS ABOUT IT.

THERE'S NOT EVEN A WOUND.

YOU WON'T FIND ONE. OR DRUGS, OR A HEART DEFECT...YOU ALSO WON'T FIND I.D., OR ANY MATCH FROM MISSING PERSONS.

HOW DO YOU--

"JANE DOE--CAUSE OF DEATH UNDETERMINED." GIRL'S A LOCKED-ROOM MYSTERY, DOWLING...

"...AND SHE'S THE THIRD ONE THIS MONTH."

BOYS!

ding dong

YAY. I PROMISED ANAHEED CUTE BOYS.

OF COURSE...

...YOU'RE MARRIED...

...YOU'RE DEAD...

AND YOU'RE...

I'M WHAT? WHAT ME?

ER... OUT OF HER LEAGUE?

ANYWAY, DRINKS, SNACKS, PEOPLE, FRIVOLITY.

WE'LL FIND OUR WAY.

OOH! THANK YOU.

AHEM.

YOU GONNA MAKE ME ASK?

HMMM...ANY CHANCE I CAN MAKE YOU BEG?

NOT THIS YEAR.

WAIT--DIDN'T THE INVITATION--

YOUR TEXT JUST SAID "PARTY." ACTUALLY, IT SAID "PRATTY," BUT I TOOK A CHANCE.

ENTER FREELY AND OF YOUR OWN WILL.

AND NO BUMPY FACE-- MY ROOMIES AREN'T IN THE KNOW.

AND THEN RED HERE'S GOING, "MAYBE WE SHOULD TRY AGAIN IN A LITTLE WHILE..."

I WAS IN SHOCK!

HOW DO YOU THINK *I* FELT?

"ROUGH AND..."?

NO.

"...WEED"?

NO.

"...DRY"?

NO.

...AND THEN I WAS LIKE, "MY GOD-- I'M *FREE!*"

EXACTLY! ME TOO!

ALL THESE GIRLS, THEY'RE STRONG, THEY'RE SELF-ACTUALIZED--AND THE WAR IS OVER! I REALIZED, THEY DON'T NEED ME TO BE A GENERAL ANYMORE!

EXACTLY! ME TOO!

SO I GOT A BUNCH OF SQUADS TOGETHER AND STARTED A DISASTER-RELIEF ORGANIZATION!

EXACTLY! ME TOO!

WHEN YOU GET RIGHT DOWN TO IT, A NICE HOT SHOWER IS JUST THOUSANDS AND THOUSANDS OF SCALDING WATER DROPS SCREAMING DOWN AT YOU LIKE KAMIKAZES IN A NEVER-ENDING WAVE OF WET HATE.

SHOELACES ARE ALSO UNACCEPTABLE.

I KNOW I DIDN'T DRINK THAT MUCH. I DON'T THINK ANYONE COULD.

BESIDES, WHAT I'M FEELING ISN'T JUST PAIN. OR EVEN GUILT, FOR FIVE WHOLE MINUTES.

IT'S DREAD.

I TOLD YOU, SOMETHING'S COMING.

NOT HUMAN, AND NOT NICE. I DON'T KNOW IF IT'S 'CAUSE OF YOU DESTROYING THE SEED...

...BUT IT HAS TO BE DEALT WITH.

THIS SHOULD GIVE YOU EVERYTHING YOU NEED.

I ONLY NEED THE PICTURE.

WHAT I CAN'T SSSSEE...I CAN SMELL OUT.

THE GIRL WILL PAY.

IN FULL.

CHICKEN MELT
ROAST BEEF
TURKEY SUB
TUNA MELT

YOU'RE KIDDING, RIGHT?

I'M GOOD.

YOUR SHIFT'S COVERED, BUFFY.

BUT I GOT DRESSED AND I WALKED FAR AND I OPENED THE WHOLE DOOR.

I TOLD YOU LAST NIGHT NOT TO COME IN.

YOU KNOW, AFTER...

"AFTER." OH BOY. GOOD THING MY FACE CAN'T ACHIEVE SURPRISE.

HOW BAD IS IT? WHAT WITH WHOM IN FRONT OF HOW MANY WHY?

OKAY.

PLEASE GIVE ME COFFEE PLEASE.

HOW COULD THIS HAPPEN?

THE SPELLS THAT BIND IT HAVE WEAKENED.

OUR CASTERS NEED BUT A FEW MOMENTS TO SEAL IT AGAIN...

MOVE AS ONE! PROTECT THE PEACE!

GGCKKK--

THIS IS NOT NOW.

ALL ARE WRONG. I ME UNHOUSED.

WORDS.

TIME SINCE WORDS, SO MUCH. CANNOT...

TASK.

HONOR THE TASK.

KILL ALL.

OKAY. DAMAGE REPORT. AS IN, HOW MUCH DID I DO?

'CAUSE I AM CAPABLE OF AWESOME. I'M USUALLY SUPER RELIABLE AND CONSCIENTIOUS AND ACCORDING TO POPULAR REPORT, A LITTLE TIGHTLY WOUND...

BUT PUT A FEW DRINKS IN ME AND I TURN INTO MRS. O'LEARY'S COW.

OR A CAVE... PERSON...BOY, WAS SHE POPULAR.

SO WHAT'S THE LAST THING I REMEMBER?

KILL! KILL!

THIS IS FUN AND RESPONSIBLE!

MAYBE I SHOULD SKIP THE REMEMBERING.

MAYBE JUST BATHE IN THE SHAME.

BECAUSE THIS IS MY TIME! THIS IS THE BLOSSOMING OF BUFFY! THE...BLUFFOMING.

I WOULDN'T BOTHER PATENTING THAT PHRASE...

I COULD DO MANY MANY INTERESTING THINGS WITH MY LIFE! I COULD ENTER THE CHALLENGING WORLD OF HAERBRADASHRENING.

THIS IS MY RIDE.

HABBLEDASPERY.

HAVE-A-DASH-OF-TEA?

HABERDASHERY.

YEAH WHAT'S THAT ABOUT?

HATS.

HATS! I COULD DO HATS! HATS ARE AWESOME! EVERYONE NEEDS THEM WHEN THE SUN IS SHINING DOWN.

OOH! DO YOU HAVE D.V.D.'S IN THE BACK SEAT?

WAIT--STILL LOCKED...

DO YOU HAVE *PORN?*

YOU'RE INTO PORN NOW.

GROSS! BUT DON'T WE THINK I SHOULD START? WHAT'S ALL THIS FOR?

RIGHT NOW, TERRORISTS.

JUST REGULAR TERRORISTS? LIKE, GUYS WHO SUCK?

MONSTER-HUNTING WORK'S PRETTY THIN THESE DAYS.

END OF MAGIC. WHAT GENIUS MADE THAT HAPPEN?

I COULD BE A D.J.! I KNOW A WHOLE BUNCH OF SONGS! I KNOW EIGHT SONGS.

BUFFY, YOU CAN STOP CONVINCING YOURSELF THINGS ARE BETTER NOW.

I CAN'T HEAR YOU SO WELL.

PEOPLE WERE DYING. I WAS NEARLY ONE OF THEM.

SHATTERING THE SEED...I'VE HEARD SOME COMPLAINTS, BUT I HAVEN'T HEARD ONE BETTER WAY TO STOP WHAT WAS HAPPENING.

YOU SOUND LIKE SPIKE.

WORDS TO CRINGE BY...

THE LAST CONVERSATION WE HAD WAS A PEP TALK.

IS THAT YOUR NEW SECRET TASK FORCE? PEP SQUAD? 'CAUSE THE VAN IS GONNA NEED A NEW LOOK.

I'LL SKIP THE TALK. PARTY WAS GREAT. YOU'RE GREAT. AS PER USUAL.

YOU KNOW WHAT THIS VAN REALLY NEEDS...?

A WOMAN'S TOUCH.

I DID NOT MAKE A PASS AT A MARRIED MAN.

THAT WOULD BE WRONG.

I'D REMEMBER THE NEXT PART.

BESIDES, THAT SHAME WOULD INTERFERE WITH THIS SHAME.

WE NEED TO TALK ABOUT YOUR FRIENDS.

THEY'RE REALLY NICE...
THEY'RE AWESOME AND WE WANT TO HANG OUT WITH THEM MORE.
YEP.
BUT...
BUT WHAT?
MISTAKES WERE MADE...
THAT'S WHAT RAGERS ARE FOR! YOUR FRIENDS ARE SWEET, AND WILD, AND WILLOW HAS MADE ME BI-CURIOUS BUT DON'T TELL HER THAT.
SPIKE AND I ARE STARTING A BAND.
MY FRIENDS ARE COOL.
AND I'M COOL TOO, LIKE, YOU TOTALLY DON'T WANT ME TO MOVE OUT OR SOMETHING.
YOU GOT STUPID FUNKY DRUNKY, I'M NOT GONNA LIE.
WE HAVE ANOTHER PARTY LIKE THAT THIS YEAR, THE NEIGHBORS ARE GONNA RISE UP AGAINST US.
BUT YOU SCORED HUGE IN ZD.
"SCORED"?
THE SHUT-IN, REMEMBER? CALLS THE COPS IF SOMEONE SNORES. YOU GO IN HIS HOUSE FOR TWENTY MINUTES, DRUNK AS A MOUSE, AND TODAY HE SENDS US FLOWERS.
"THANK YOU FOR INVITING ME TO YOUR PARTY. WELCOME TO THE NEIGHBORHOOD. HEINRICH."
WE DIDN'T EVEN KNOW HIS NAME.
FACE IT, BUFFY...

"...YOU'VE GOT A WAY OF DRAWING PEOPLE IN."

SOMETHING BIG.

NOT JUST A BANG. SOMETHING THAT CHANGES THINGS.

THAT SHOWS THEM WE'RE STILL HERE.

THAT WE'RE BETTER THAN THEM.

AND NOT ALL OF US HAVE LOST OUR WAY.

SEE? FROM THE MIDDLE YOU CAN ALMOST TOUCH ALL THE WALLS. FANCY, NO?

NOPE.

YER MISSING MY WHOLE REMODELING PLAN. I CAN ALMOST FIT A POSTER OVER THERE.

YOU HAVE A PLAN? THAT ISN'T A BATTLE PLAN? NOW I'M IMPRESSED.

ARE YOU HAVING A SUBTEXT ON ME?

JUST DANGEROUSLY FRUITY PUNCH.

I LIKE YOUR ROOM. I LIKE YOUR ROOMIES. IT'S A WONDERFUL LIFE.

HEY, YOU WANNA TALK 'BOUT IT? NOBODY'LL MISS US; WE GOT A FEW MINUTES...

THEN LET'S USE THAT FEW MINUTES TO NOT TALK ABOUT IT.

DAWNIE...

--NEVER HAS TO KNOW.

...AND THEN FOUR YEARS OF GRAD SCHOOL, FOUR YEARS OF THE GREAT AMERICAN FIRST TWENTY PAGES OF A NOVEL, NOW I'M A FACT CHECKER FOR A WEBSITE AND I'M THIRTY AND I'M PRETTY SURE I'D SLEEP WITH MOST OF THE GUYS HERE IF THEY TOLD ME I LOOKED TWENTY-EIGHT.

WEBSITES HAVE FACT CHECKERS?

OR WITH WILLOW.

SHE'S HOT AND LATELY SAD.

IT'S WEIRD, BUT WHAT ARE YOU GONNA DO? THAT'S MY HOME. A DIRIGIBLE RUN BY INSECTS.

WE SHOULD TOTALLY CALL OUR BAND THAT.

BUT IN A HACK CIRCLE EVERYONE'S BRINGING THEIR ENERGY TO EVERYONE ELSE, IT'S ALL ABOUT GIVING, IT'S ALL ABOUT KEEPING THE SPIRIT ALOFT.

I COULD SO WIN AT THAT.

AND I SCORED BEST FOR BEING A POLICE COP! THAT WAS WHAT MY APTITUDE SCORED AT!

KEEP 'EM COMING, BARMAID!

YESSIR, MISTER COWHAND!

BUZZ OFF, GIANT MOSQUITO. I ONLY HIRE ROACHES.

FASTER! MORE!

NAKED!

I CAN'T EVEN BELIEVE YOU'RE TRYING TO PATROL TONIGHT.
I JUST FEEL THE NEED TO MAKE MYSELF USEFUL.
AND IF A VAMPIRE SHOWS UP, YOU'LL BARF ON THEM?
BLOODY WELL HOPE NOT...
HEY, IT'S STALKY THE CLOWN.
THAT'S A BIT HARSH, AFTER LAST NIGHT.
IT WAS KINDA MEAN--WAIT. WHAT "LAST NIGHT"?
LET'S ALL NOT FIND OUT!
I KEEP TELLING BUFFY SHE'S BEING TARGETED.
BUT NOT BY WHO, OR ANYTHING NEW...
I'VE HEARD THE SAME THING.
IS THAT WHY YOU CAME OUT? TO PROTECT ME?
AND WHAT ARE *YOU* GONNA DO? WHAT MAGIC HAVE YOU GOT THAT CAN'T BE BOUGHT IN A JOKE SHOP?
I WAS HOPING TO TALK TO BUFFY *ALONE*, ACTUALLY.
IS IT ABOUT THE SEED?
YEAH.
THEN CAN WE NOT?

BUFFY, IT'S NOT ABOUT BLAME.

WELL IT FEELS PRETTY BLAME-Y!

OR YOU'RE BEING PROJECTING-Y!

I'M ALSO GONNA ADD "Y" TO THE END OF MY SENTENCE-Y.

YOU TOOK THE SPARK OF CREATION OUT OF THE WORLD. YOU DON'T SEE IT THE WAY I CAN--

THERE'S STILL MONSTERS! THERE'S STILL STUFF!

YOU BOTH MAKE VALID POINTS-Y.

IT ISN'T THE SAME. SOONER OR LATER, YOU'RE GOING TO SEE WHAT I MEAN. I JUST DON'T WANT IT TO BE TOO LATE.

IT *IS* TOO LATE.

BUFFY SUMMERS, IT IS TIME FOR YOU TO *PAY*...

YOUR STUDENT LOAN!

DON'T YOU SAY A F#@$ING WORD.

FREEFALL

Part Two

...WHAT DO WE CALL THE REST OF THEM?

YOU WILL PAY YOUR STUDENT LOAN...

...BY CHECK, CREDIT CARD, OR CASH.

WHY SO MANY ZEROS?

I THINK THOSE ARE DRIPS.

NO, THOSE ARE ZEROS.

AND IF I DON'T PAY UP?

YOU WILL LEARN THE HORRORS OF...

...BAD CREDIT.

GGCKGCK!

KILLING HIM WON'T MAKE THE LOAN GO AWAY.

IT'LL MAKE *HIM* GO AWAY.

AND BIGGER, BADDER, DRIPPIER NASTIES WILL SHOW UP.

COLLECTING IS JUST MY DAY JOB.

WHEN THE SEED WAS DESTROYED, I WAS TRAPPED IN THIS REALM.

IT'S EXPENSIVE.

I'LL GET FIRED IF I GO BACK EMPTY HANDED.

DON'T SAY A WORD ABOUT THE SEED, WILL--

WHERE'S THE CLOSEST *A.T.M.?*

THAT'S EVERY PENNY I HAVE.

THIS DOESN'T EVEN COVER THE FIRST PAYMENT.

SIDEBAR, PLEASE.

WHEN I WAS OFF TRAIPSING ABOUT IN A DIRIGIBLE RUN BY GIANT BUGS, WEREN'T YOU WANTED AS AN INTERNATIONAL JEWEL THIEF?

I ONLY STOLE TO PAY FOR THE CAUSE.

AND THE OCCASIONAL OUTFIT.

YOU MUST HAVE STASHED *SOMETHING* AWAY FOR A RAINY DAY.

I GAVE IT ALL BACK WHEN RILEY NEGOTIATED AN AMNESTY BETWEEN SLAYERS AND INTERPOL.

ONE CREATURE OF THE NIGHT TO ANOTHER, CUT HER A LITTLE SLACK.

SHE DIDN'T EVEN FINISH COLLEGE, YOU KNOW. AND WE'RE TALKING U.C. SUNNYDALE.

CONSIDER THIS YOUR FIRST NOTICE.

NEXT TIME I WON'T BE SO NICCCCEEE...

POOR DEMON.

POOR JACKET.

POOR BANK ACCOUNT.

THIS IS WHAT I'M TALKING ABOUT, BUFFY.

YOU DON'T REALIZE HOW THE DESTRUCTION OF THE SEED AFFECTED EVERYONE. YOU ONLY THINK ABOUT HOW IT AFFECTED *YOU.*

ALL THE SLAYERS, THE VAMPIRES, EVEN THE DEMONS WITH MAGICAL MOJO.

YOU ALL GOT TO KEEP YOUR POWER BECAUSE IT WAS *INSIDE* OF YOU.

BUT EVERYONE ELSE GOT CUT OFF FROM WHAT MADE THEM TICK.

FOR ME, IT WAS MAGIC. FOR THAT DEMON, HIS HOME.

WE'VE BEEN THROUGH THIS. I HAD NO CHOICE.

MAYBE...

BUT THAT DOESN'T MEAN YOU CAN SIT BACK LIKE EVERYTHING'S OVER.

YOU'RE GOING TO HAVE TO DEAL WITH THE FALLOUT EVENTUALLY.

SO UNTIL THEN...

RED'S RIGHT, YOU KNOW.

YOU *USED* TO BE ON MY SIDE.

I'M NOT TALKING ABOUT THE SEED, LUV. I'M TALKING ABOUT THE *NOT* SITTING BACK.

YOU DON'T HEAR RUMBLINGS LIKE I DID BECAUSE BUFFY SUMMERS IS LATE ON A FEW BILLS.

"THERE'S STILL SOMEONE OUT THERE WHO'S COMING FOR YOU."

CLICK

DESTROYER MAGIC REST HERE...?

VAMPYR

...VAMPIRE SLAYER...

BUFF?

YOU UP?

YOU WANT SOME...

GIANTS

...MIDNIGHT RAMEN?

WHAT'D YOU FIND?

AN I.D. ON THE GIRL WE FOUND LAST NIGHT.

CYNTHIA DANIELS. FROM OAKLAND. FOUND HER FILE IN MISSING PERSONS.

CAN'T BE HER. I ALREADY CHECKED. AND I DON'T MISS ANYTHING.

YOU DIDN'T GO BACK FAR ENOUGH.

I WENT BACK--

TO 1941?

NO WAY. IF THIS GIRL DISAPPEARED IN 1941, SHE'D BE GERIATRIC.

THEY LOOK *EXACTLY* THE SAME.

COINCIDENCE.

PRINTS MATCH TOO.

AND I FOUND SIMILAR FILES ON TWO OF THE SIX BODIES WE BROUGHT IN TONIGHT.

FROM 1954 AND 1963.

I BET WE'LL GET HITS ON THE OTHERS IF WE KEEP LOOKING.

I'LL BELIEVE YOU *WHEN* YOU EXPLAIN WHY THESE PEOPLE HAVEN'T AGED A DAY SINCE THEY WENT MISSING.

HAVE YOU BEEN WATCHING REALITY T.V. LATELY?

'CAUSE I WAS THINKING...

"WHAT IF THESE BODIES BELONGED TO VAMPIRES?"

MY BED. THAT'S WHERE I SHOULD BE. SO I CAN WAKE UP TOMORROW MORNING TO MAKE MONEY TO GIVE TO A DEMON.

BUT I'M HERE. WATCHING MY BACK LIKE SPIKE SAID. TRYING TO FIGURE OUT HOW TO MAKE WILLOW UNDERSTAND WHY I DID WHAT I DID.

AND OF COURSE... SLAYING.

WHO AM I KIDDING?

AT LEAST I'M GOOD AT THIS--

GRRRRR...

I CAN HELP--

--BY GETTING OUT OF HERE.

I DIDN'T FORGET ABOUT YOU.

GRRRRR...

NOT SO MUCH WITH THE CLEVER COMEBACKS, HUH?

PHFT

TURN AROUND AND DROP THE...

...STAKE?

WHAT DOES THE REAL WORLD HAVE AGAINST ME?

AND WHY DOESN'T IT WANT ME TO LIVE IN IT?

WE RAN YOUR NAME.

WE KNOW YOU'RE A SLAYER.

WE PULLED WHAT THE FEDS HAD ON YOU. INTERESTING STUFF. AT LEAST WHAT THEY LET US SEE.

ANY OF THESE FACES LOOK FAMILIAR?

SHOULD THEY?

DETECTIVE DOWLING HAS THE NOVEL THEORY THAT THESE BODIES BELONG TO VAMPIRES.

AND SINCE YOU'RE A SLAYER...

YOU THINK I KILLED THEM?

THEY'RE NOT EVEN VAMPIRES.

WHAT MAKES YOU SO SURE?

UNDEAD 101. NO MATTER HOW A VAMP DIES--STAKE TO THE CHEST, DECAPITATION, SUNLIGHT--

IT ALWAYS ENDS IN ONE BIG *POOF.*

LIKE THE VAMPIRE YOU KILLED TONIGHT?

THE TERM IS SLAYED. AND IS NOW WHEN I ASK FOR A LAWYER?

I DON'T THINK SHE HAS ANYTHING TO DO WITH THE JANE AND JOHN DOES.

YOU WERE THE ONE PUSHING THE VAMPIRE ANGLE, SO TELL ME WHY YOU BACK OFF WHEN A SLAYER GETS CAUGHT KILLING A VAMPIRE IN THE SAME NEIGHBORHOOD WE'RE FINDING BODIES?

YOU HEARD WHAT SHE SAID...

...VAMPIRES ALWAYS GO UP IN DUST.

RM 112

SHE HAS EVERY REASON TO LIE TO US.

LOOK, WE DON'T KNOW WHO OR WHAT IS KILLING OUR VICTIMS.

UNTIL WE HAVE A BETTER IDEA, SHE DOESN'T GO ANYWHERE.

KEEP HER TALKING. SOMETHING WILL SHAKE LOOSE.

MS. SUMMERS?

MAYBE I SHOULD HAVE WAITED FOR A LAWYER.

BUFFY?

YOU'RE HOME?

AND YOU'RE ON T.V.

--A PERSON OF INTEREST IN THE APPEARANCE OF NINE BODIES THROUGHOUT THE JACKSON SQUARE HISTORIC DISTRICT--

--RESIDENTS ARE ADVISED TO CALL THE S.F.P.D. HOTLINE WITH ANY INFORMATION--

CONGRATS! YOU ARE NOW A FUGITIVE.

ARE YOU GOING TO BLAME THE ONE-ARMED MAN?

SO WHO'S REALLY RESPONSIBLE FOR THE BODIES?

I'M GUESSING SOMETHING DEMONY. THE POLICE HAVE NO CLUE...

...SO IF I EVER WANT TO SHOW MY FACE IN PUBLIC AGAIN, I'M GOING TO HAVE TO GIVE THEM ONE.

BEFORE I DO THAT, IS IT COOL IF I CRASH HERE? I CAN'T GO TO MY PLACE, AND I HAVEN'T SLEPT IN TWENTY-FOUR HOURS, AND...

...WHAT?

AS MUCH AS WE'D LIKE TO AID AND ABET...

...WE CAN'T AID AND WE'RE NOT EVEN SURE WHAT ABETTING IS.

BUT YOU MADE UP THE COUCH AND EVERYTHING.

YEAH... THAT'S NOT FOR YOU.

UH-OH--

DAWNIE, IS EVERYTHING OKAY WITH YOU GUYS?

NOTHING A FEW NIGHTS OF LITTLE-TO-NO SLEEP ON A VERY UNCOMFORTABLE COUCH WON'T FIX.

I CAN TAKE THE MANY HINTS. WHO WANTS TO SHOW ME TO THE WINDOW?

SORRY WE'RE GIVING YOU THE BOOT.

YOU'RE TRYING TO HAVE A NORMAL LIFE. JUST BECAUSE I CAN'T, DOESN'T MEAN YOU SHOULDN'T.

AND AMONGST MY FORMIDABLE SLAYER POWERS COMES THE ABILITY TO STAY UP AS LONG AS POSSIBLE WITH-OUT GETTING CRANKY.

OKAY, I'M PRETTY FREAKIN' CRANKY.

EVERYBODY GETS TO HAVE NORMAL EXCEPT FOR ME.

YOU'RE A HARD GIRL TO FIND.

THAT'S THE IDEA.

WANT TO TELL ME HOW YOU MANAGED TO GET PINCHED?

I BLAME THE VAMPIRE I DUSTED.

IF I HADN'T GOTTEN CAUGHT SLAYING HIM, I WOULDN'T BE PUBLIC ENEMY NUMBER ONE...

LIKE YOU HAD A CHOICE. KILLING BEASTIES IS HARD-WIRED INTO WHO YOU ARE.

WHY COULDN'T DESTROYING THE SEED HAVE TAKEN *THAT* AWAY? ALONG WITH WHATEVER MAKES VAMPIRES TICK.

THEN I COULD BE BUFFY, MINUS THE WORDS SLAYER, CHOSEN, AND ONE.

FOR STARTERS, I'D BE DEAD. AND YOU WOULDN'T BE NEARLY AS MUCH FUN.

FUN IS OVERRATED.

BUT I'D PROBABLY MISS YOU.

BLOODY HELL YOU WOULD.

'SPECIALLY SINCE I'M GOING TO FIGURE OUT WHO'S COMING FOR YOU.

THANKS, SPIKE.

YOU JUST WORRY ABOUT STAYING OUT OF THE CLINK.

EASY FOR SPIKE TO SAY.

I'M TRYING TO FIND THE WHO-KNOWS-WHAT THAT'S LEAVING BODIES I'M GETTING BLAMED FOR.

AND APPARENTLY THE ONLY THING I'M GOOD AT FINDING ARE VAMPIRES.

BLANC NOIR

BECAUSE I'M BUFFY. FOLLOWED BY THE WORDS SLAYER, CHOSEN, AND ONE.

PHFT

YOU AGAIN?

I CAN HELP.

I'M A SLAYER. LIKE YOU.

YOU REMEMBER TO BRING A STAKE, WE'LL TALK.

WHEN ARE YOU GOING TO LEARN?

DON'T RUN INTO ALLEYS.

GRRR...

WHEN AM I GOING TO LEARN?

DON'T RUN INTO ALLEYS.

OOOF--

GGKCK...

I TOLD YOU I COULD HELP.

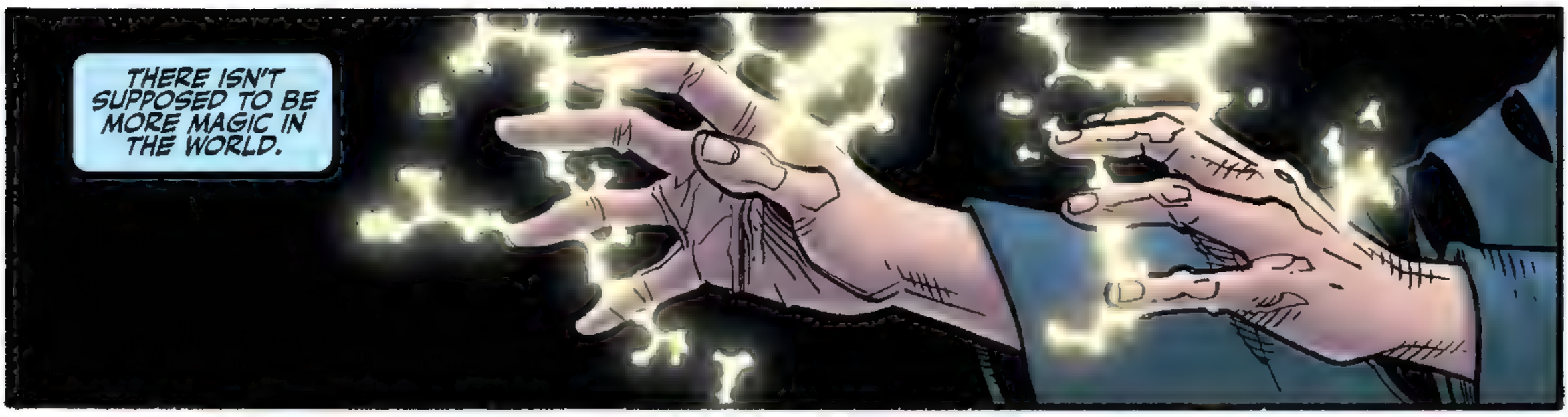
HOW WHAT WHY, PLEASE.

HE'S NOT A VAMPIRE ANYMORE.

NONE OF THEM ARE.

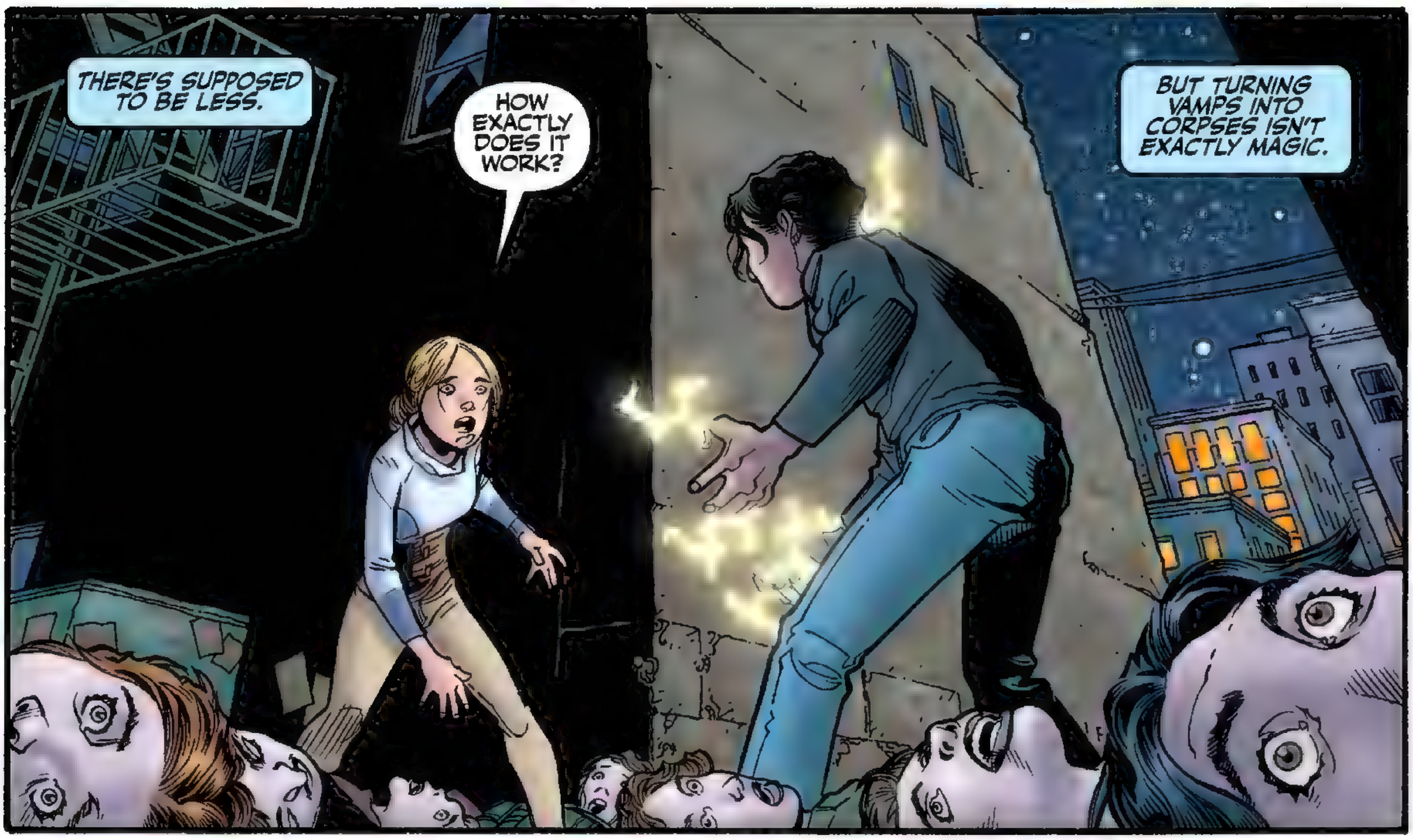
YOU TRYING TO PUT ME OUT OF A JOB?

'CAUSE I MIGHT BE OKAY WITH THAT.



FREEFALL

Part Three



JUST SUCKING WHAT'S LEFT OF IT FROM THE WORLD.

C'MON!

WHY--

'CAUSE RIGHT NOW, I'M GETTING BLAMED FOR ALL THOSE BODIES YOU'RE DROPPING.

I DIDN'T MEAN TO GET YOU IN TROUBLE.

I WAS JUST TRYING TO HELP.

MY NAME'S SEVERIN.

OKAY, SEV, YOU WANT TO HELP?

YOU KNOW SOMEPLACE I CAN SLEEP WHERE THE COPS WON'T FIND ME?

SOUTH SAN FRANCISCO
87
POLICE

WE'RE LOOKING FOR BUFFY SUMMERS.

IS THIS ABOUT THE PARTY WE THREW THE OTHER NIGHT? BECAUSE OFFICERS GREGGS AND FARRELL--GREAT DANCERS, B.T.W.--SAID THEY WEREN'T GOING TO WRITE US UP.

WE NEED TO TALK TO HER ABOUT SOMETHING ELSE.

IS SHE HOME?

I HAVEN'T SEEN HER IN A COUPLE DAYS. MAYBE SHE'S CRASHING AT HER SISTER'S.

IF SHE CHECKS IN...

LET US KNOW.

San Francisco Police Department
Detective
Robert Dowling
Homicide

Nomed REALTY open 24

"TELL ME WHO CAME TO TOWN TO DO SOMETHING BAD TO THE SLAYER."

OPEN

REALTY 24

WHY DO YOU CARE WHAT HAPPENS TO HER AFTER ALL SHE'S DONE TO US?

I'M THE ONE ASKING THE QUESTIONS, MATE.

NOTHING NASTY COMES TO TOWN WITHOUT COMING TO YOU TO FIND A PLACE TO STAY.

WHERE IS HE?

YOU STILL LIVING IN THAT INTERGALACTIC ROACH MOTEL? I COULD GET YOU A GREAT DEAL ON A CRYPT. LIGHT, AIRY, RENT CONTROLLED...

WITH GRANITE COUNTERTOPS!

LAST TIME I'M GOING TO ASK NICELY.

WHO IS AFTER BUFFY?

HE WILL *KILL* YOU.

NOT BEFORE I KILL YOU.

AND WITHOUT THE SEED, YOU WON'T GO BACK TO A CUSHY HELL DIMENSION.

I DON'T KNOW HIS NAME.

"BUT I SET HIM UP WITH A PLACE WHERE NO ONE WILL FIND HIM.

"SAID IT REMINDS HIM OF WHERE HE CAME FROM."

SHE BECOMES MORE DIFFICULT TO FIND.

Jackson Poin
Kille

BUFFY?

OW. OW. OW.
JUST BRINGING YOU COFFEE.
OH, RIGHT. WANNABE SLAYER WITH THE MYSTERY TOUCH WHO LET ME CRASH HERE FOR THE NIGHT.
HOW DID I MISS THE SCHMANCIEST APARTMENT I'VE EVER SEEN IN MY LIFE?
I'VE NEVER SEEN SOMEONE FALL ASLEEP FASTER.
THE VIEW'S KIND OF SPECTACULAR. AND THE BENEFIT OF BEING A TRUST-FUND KID.
WHY WOULD YOU RISK THIS AWESOMENESS TO PLAY EXORCIST TO A BUNCH OF VAMPIRES?
THAT'S THE THING, BUFFY.
I NEVER WANTED TO KILL VAMPIRES.
I WANTED TO *BE* ONE.
YOU TOO?

"MY GIRLFRIEND, CLARE, GOT ME INTO IT..."

...AND THE WINNER OF "DANCING WITH THE STARS" IS...

"SHE MADE THE CONNECTIONS WITH THE FANGED COMMUNITY.

"AT BARS, NIGHT-CLUBS, WHEREVER SHE COULD MEET THEM.

"IT DIDN'T TAKE LONG. TURNS OUT SOMEONE SHE WENT TO HIGH SCHOOL WITH TOOK THE LEAP LAST YEAR."

OH MY GOD, ALESSANDRA! REMEMBER ME?!

"SHE WAS GOING TO SIRE CLARE.

"THEN CLARE WOULD SIRE ME.

"BUT WHEN THE TIME CAME, I GOT NERVOUS."

WE'LL BE TOGETHER FOREVER.

DON'T WORRY. I WON'T BITE TOO HARD.

"I SHOULD HAVE STOPPED HER...

"BUT I DIDN'T.

"I STOOD THERE AND WATCHED MY GIRLFRIEND DIE."

RELAX. SHE'LL WAKE UP IN A FEW HOURS. BETTER THAN EVER.

YOU DIDN'T WANT TO BE A VAMPIRE, DID YOU?

THAT'S JUST WHAT *SHE* WANTED.

NO, I WANTED TO BE A VAMPIRE...

...AT LEAST UNTIL CLARE WOKE UP.

"SHE WASN'T LIKE THE VAMPIRES WE SAW ON T.V. OR OUT AT CLUBS."

GRRRR

GRRRR

"SHE WAS MEAN... BLOODTHIRSTY... AN ANIMAL...

"SHE DIDN'T EVEN KNOW WHO I WAS."

CLARE--!

"I DIDN'T MEAN TO DO IT. I DIDN'T KNOW I COULD.

"I WAS JUST TRYING TO PROTECT MYSELF.

"AS THE POWER SURGED THROUGH MY HANDS...

"I SAW IT IN HER EYES FOR A SPLIT SECOND.

"SHE WAS HUMAN...

"...AND THEN SHE WAS DEAD.

I STILL DON'T KNOW WHY IT HAPPENED.

MY HANDS RIPPED OUT THE THING THAT MADE HER A VAMPIRE.

CLARE WOULDN'T HAVE BEEN BETTER OFF AS A NORMAL VAMPIRE. NEITHER WOULD YOU.

NO OFFENSE, BUT I WOULD HAVE KILLED BOTH OF YOU IF WE'D CROSSED PATHS.

IT'S NOT JUST CLARE WHO WOKE UP FERAL. IT'S ALL THE VAMPIRES I'VE SEEN TURN SINCE.

THEY ATTACK ANY HUMAN THEY SEE. LIKE THEY CAN'T CONTROL IT.

SO WHATEVER THIS IS...

I'VE BEEN USING IT TO KILL VAMPIRES WHO ARE STILL TURNING PEOPLE.

AND PUTTING THE MINDLESS ONES OUT OF THEIR MISERY.

WHEN DID YOUR GIRLFRIEND TURN?

A COUPLE MONTHS AGO.

SHE WAS SIRED *AFTER* THE SEED WAS DESTROYED.

WHAT'S THE SEED?

SEV, I THINK IT'S MY FAULT THAT VAMPIRES ARE GOING FERAL.

WE HAVEN'T SEEN OR HEARD FROM BUFFY IN DAYS.

WE'RE NOT VERY CLOSE AS FAR AS SISTERS GO.

HUMAN SEE HUMAN DO

SO THAT COUCH WOULDN'T BE MADE UP FOR HER?

YOU'RE NOT THE FIRST TO MAKE THAT MISTAKE.

BUT, NOPE, THAT'S FOR ME.

YOU TWO ARE FIGHTING?

WHAT'S THE FIGHT ABOUT?

HE FORGOT MY BIRTHDAY.

I DIDN'T FORGET HER BIRTHDAY BECAUSE HER BIRTHDAY HASN'T HAPPENED YET.

HE FORGOT MY BIRTHDAY BECAUSE HE WAS SUPPOSED TO PLAN SOMETHING *AHEAD* OF TIME.

IT'S STILL AHEAD OF TIME--

AND NOW WE'RE FIGHTING IN FRONT OF THE POLICE.

WHICH MEANS YOU CAN SEE THAT THE FIGHT IS VERY REAL AND VERY RIDICULOUS.

CALL US THE MOMENT YOU HEAR ANYTHING FROM MS. SUMMERS.

THINGS WILL BE MUCH EASIER IF SHE COMES TO US BEFORE WE FIND HER.

SPEAK OF THE SLAYER.

BUFFY'S CALLING A SCOOBY MEETING.

IS THIS THREE YEARS AGO?

NOPE, STILL MISSING AN EYE.

BZZZ

HUMAN SEE HUMAN DO

BZZZ

BLOODY CRAP TIMING.

BZZZ

'CAUSE BABY I WAS BORN THIS WAY.

'CAUSE BABY I WAS BORN THIS WAY.

BZZZ

THANKS FOR COMING, GUYS.

WHY WOULDN'T WE WANT TO COME TO THE NICEST FLOPHOUSE IN TOWN?

WHERE'S EVERYBODY ELSE?

AND WHO IS HE?

THIS IS SEVERIN.

AND SPIKE'S ON A BOAT, ANDREW'S--WELL, I ONLY INVITED HIM TO BE POLITE-- AND WILLOW NEVER TEXTED BACK.

DAWNIE?

IT'S BUFFY.

YOU DIDN'T SHOW UP.

WHY ARE YOU CALLING FROM DAWN'S PHONE?

AFTER THE WAY WE LEFT THINGS THE OTHER NIGHT, I DIDN'T KNOW IF YOU'D PICK UP IF I CALLED.

I'M AT WORK, BUFFY. AND SHOULDN'T YOU BE ON THE RUN FROM THE POLICE?

I THINK YOU MIGHT BE RIGHT, WILL. ABOUT THINGS GETTING WORSE BECAUSE THE SEED IS GONE.

REALLY?

I'M NOT SAYING I MADE THE WRONG CHOICE, BUT THERE MIGHT BE FALLOUT FROM IT THAT I HAVE TO DEAL WITH.

OKAY. I'M LISTENING.

FOR THOSE OF YOU WHO HAVEN'T BEEN SLAYING VAMPIRES--

I THINK THAT'S US.

--SOMETHING'S CHANGED.

THEY'RE MEANER, FASTER, STRONGER, AND DROOL A LOT MORE.

WHO'S THAT?

SEVERIN.

BUT HE'S THE TOPIC OF OUR NEXT SCOOBY MEETING.

TODAY IS ABOUT FIGURING OUT HOW AND WHY VAMPIRES ARE ON STEROIDS.

DIDN'T GILES LEAVE YOU A BOOK TITLED "VAMPYR"?

THERE'S A BOOK?

YEAH, BUT IT'S FIVE THOUSAND PAGES LONG. AND I CAN'T EXACTLY GO BACK TO MY APARTMENT TO GET IT.

HOW DID WE NOT THINK OF THIS SOONER? WHEN SOMEONE BECOMES A VAMPIRE, A DEMON POSSESSES THEIR DEAD BODY.

BUT WITHOUT THE SEED, DEMONS CAN'T PASS INTO THIS WORLD. THE DEMON HAS TO POSSESS THE VAMPIRE'S BODY FROM ANOTHER DIMENSION.

WHICH MEANS EVERYONE WHO'S TURNED SINCE THE SEED WAS DESTROYED IS A ZOMBIE VAMPIRE.

ZOMPIRES!

I'VE NAMED THEM. MY WORK IS DONE HERE.

I KNOW WHERE THERE'S A NEST.

YOU AND I CAN TAKE THEM OUT TOGETHER.

AND THAT'S OUR CUE TO INTERVENE.

I THOUGHT YOU CAME OVER HERE SO WE COULD SCOOBY.

THE REASON WE CAME WAS TO GIVE YOU THIS.

THE DETECTIVE'S PHONE NUMBER?

WE THINK YOU SHOULD CALL HIM.

NO ONE'S COMPLAINING ABOUT VAMPIRES, RIGHT NOW.

ZOMPIRES. I THOUGHT WE AGREED ON ZOMPIRES.

AND YOU'RE ALL OVER THE NEWS. THE ZOMPIRES CAN WAIT. BUT THE COPS...

THEY'RE WILLING TO WORK THINGS OUT BEFORE IT GETS WORSE.

I KNOW YOU'RE TRYING TO DO THE RIGHT THING, BUT YOU CAN'T HIDE FROM REALITY.

ESPECIALLY WHEN YOUR HIDEOUT IS MADE OUT OF GLASS.

HE'S RIGHT, BUFFY.

YOU CAN'T TRUST THE POLICE. THEY DON'T WANT TO TALK. THEY WANT TO LOCK YOU UP.

I CAN'T TAKE OUT THE NEST WITHOUT YOU.

THINGS ARE DIFFERENT NOW. EVERYONE KNOWS ABOUT VAMPIRES. AND THEY *LIKE* THEM.

MAYBE YOU NEED TO WORK WITH THE POLICE TO STOP THE ZOMPIRES.

BUT PLEASE, BUFFY, WHATEVER YOU DECIDE...

JUST BE CAREFUL...

"...I'D HATE TO SEE MY BIG SISTER END UP IN JAIL."

HE WAS HERE.

IN MY LANDS...

...I KILL BLOOD RATS JUST FOR BREATHING THE SAME AIR AS ME.

WELL, WHERE I'M FROM...

I'D WANT TO KNOW WHY A BEASTIE WITH LIGHTSABERS FOR HANDS IS LOOKING FOR BUFFY.

THE SLAYER KILLED THE SEED.

PEOPLE ARE REALLY GOING TO HAVE TO GET OVER THE WHOLE SEED THING.

YOU MIS-THINK.

I SEEK THE SLAYER TO SHOW HER THANKS.

MILLENNIA AGO, I WAS WRONGED. IMPRISONED IN THIS REALM BY ENEMIES. TRAPPED WITH MAGIC. WITH ITS FADING, I BROKE MY BONDS AND ESCAPED MY CAPTORS.

BY THE CODE OF THE NITOBE, I, ELDRE KOH, AM BOUND TO THE ONE WHO FREED ME.

IF YOU ARE FRIEND TO THE SLAYER, YOU WILL TELL ME WHERE SHE IS.

I DON'T BUY IT. NOT FOR ONE SECOND.

IF YOU'RE HERE TO SHAKE BUFFY'S HAND, WHY HAVE I BEEN HEARING RUMORS THAT YOU'RE TRYING TO OFF HER?

NOT OF ME.

OF THE SIPHON.

THE *SIPHON?* SOUNDS LIKE AN INFOMERCIAL FOR A BLOODY VACUUM CLEANER.

YOU MOCK WHAT YOU DON'T KNOW.

YOU JUST GOT OUT OF DEMON JAIL. NO WAY YOU KNOW MORE ABOUT THIS THAN I DO.

I KNOW DEMONS OLDER THAN YOUR KIND.

THEY ALL FEAR THE ARRIVAL OF THE SIPHON.

A BEING WHO RIPS MYSTICAL ENERGY FROM ALL HE TOUCHES.

ALL WHO POSSESS POWER. VAMPIRE, DEMON...

...EVEN *SLAYER.*

IARF

"AND HE'S HEADING STRAIGHT AT YOUR FRIEND."

ARE YOU SURE YOU CAN HANDLE THIS?

DON'T WORRY ABOUT ME, BUFFY.

THERE'S SOMETHING I DIDN'T TELL YOU ABOUT MY POWERS.

EVERY TIME I KILL A VAMPIRE...

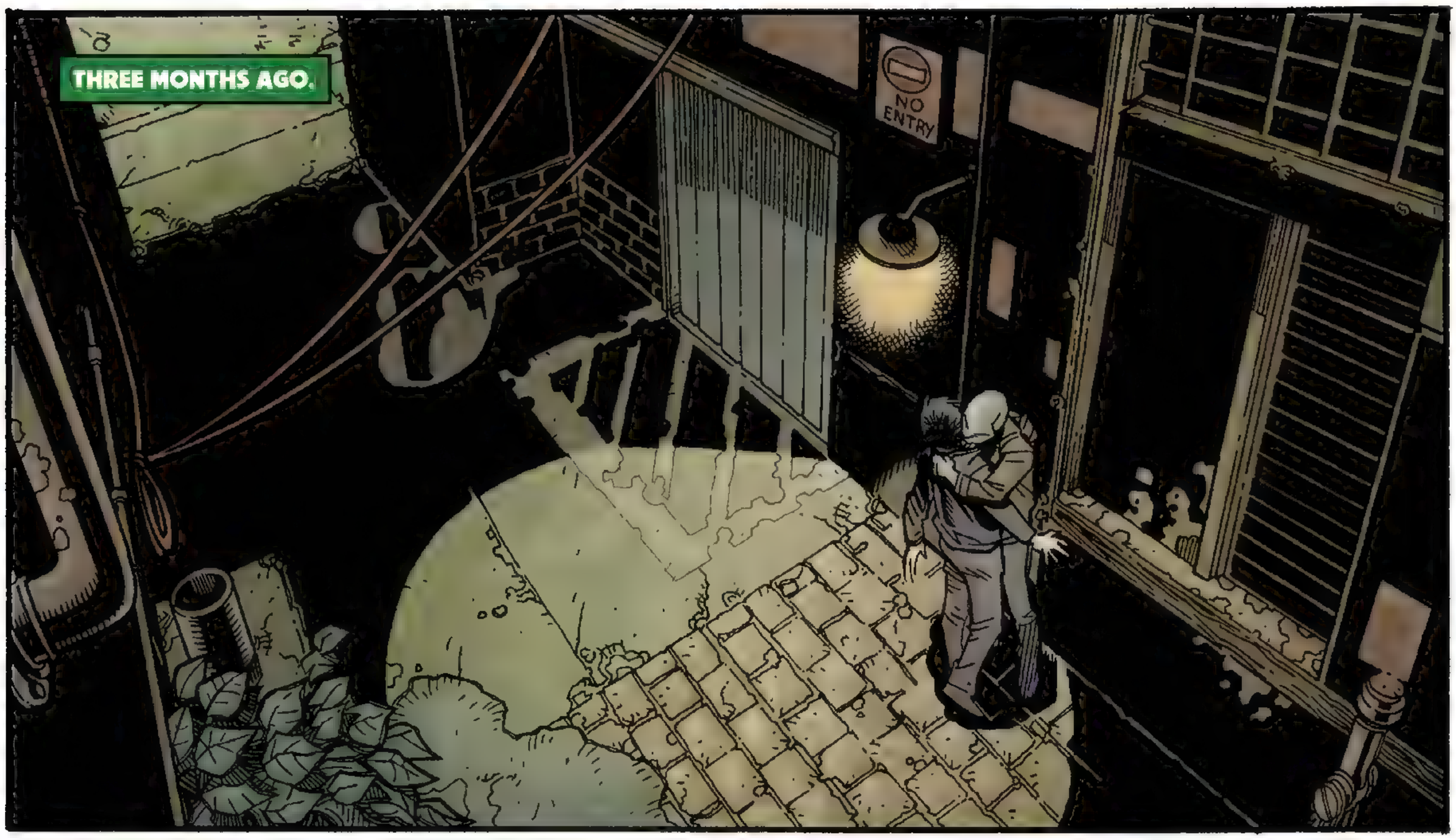
I GET STRONGER.

SO AFTER WE TAKE OUT THIS NEST...

I MIGHT EVEN BE STRONGER THAN YOU.

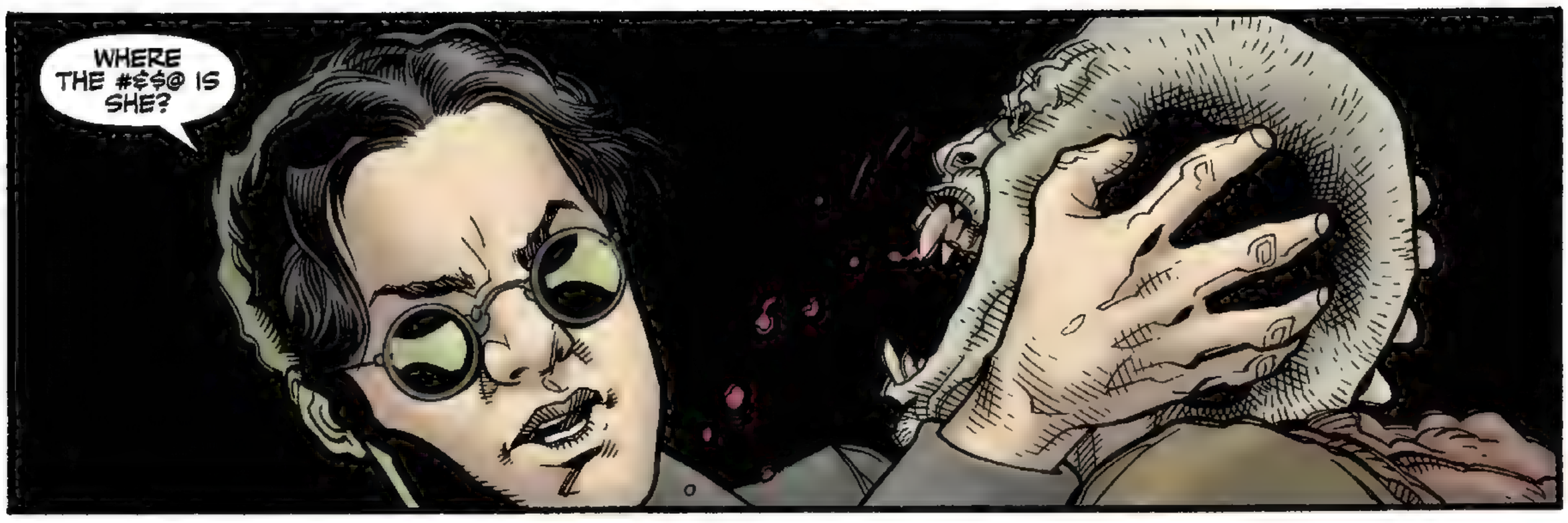
THEY'RE ALREADY DEAD...

I KNOW.



FREEFALL

Part Four



WHERE'S ALESSANDRA?

YOU DON'T TELL ME, YOU'RE GOING TO LOSE THOSE FANGS...

...AND THEY WON'T GROW BACK.

LEAVE HIM ALONE--

YOU WANT TO KNOW WHO TO BLAME FOR WHAT HAPPENED TO YOUR GIRL?

STOP LOOKING FOR A VAMPIRE.

Andy's

AND START LOOKING FOR A SLAYER...

"...HER NAME'S BUFFY SUMMERS."

SEV--

"AND I WANT YOU TO DESTROY EVERYTHING THAT MAKES HER WHO SHE IS.

"HER POWER, HER FREEDOM...

"AND THE NAUSEATING IDEA THAT SHE'S DOING GOOD."

WHEN DID YOU BECOME A BIG BAD?

I'M NOT THE BAD GUY.

YOU ARE.

IF YOU HADN'T DESTROYED THE SEED, I WOULDN'T HAVE HAD TO PUT ANY OF THESE *VAMP FREAKS* DOWN.

YOU DON'T DESERVE THE POWER YOU HAVE.

SO I'M GOING TO *TAKE* IT.

YOU CAN DO THAT?

I JUST NEEDED TO CHARGE UP.

"AND WHEN THE COPS FIND YOU COWERING AMONGST ALL THESE BODIES..."

WHAT IS IT?

"...THEY ARE GOING TO BLAME YOU FOR *EVERYTHING.*"

PATROL GOT AN ANONYMOUS TIP TWENTY MINUTES AGO...

CHEUNG, IT'S SUMMERS. SOMEONE SPOTTED HER AT THE WHARF.

CALLER SAYS SHE'S KILLED HUNDREDS OF VAMPIRES.

ALL AVAILABLE UNITS REPORT TO THE CENTRAL EMBARCADERO--

WE COULDN'T HAVE TAKEN THE SODDING FERRY?

MY KIND DON'T MIX WITH HUMANS.

YEAH, WELL VAMPIRES AND WATER AREN'T EXACTLY BEST FRIENDS EITHER.

WATCH IT, KOH--

NO APOLOGY FOR HASTE. WE MUST FIND THE SLAYER BEFORE THE SIPHON DOES.

I'M WORKING ON IT, MATE, BUT I'M A COUPLE BARS SHORT OF A FULL TEXT. AND THE WATER AIN'T HELPING.

TELL ME WHY VERMIN LIKE YOU IS DESPERATE TO RESCUE A *SLAYER.*

WHEN YOU PUT IT LIKE THAT...

THE SLAYER AND I GO WAY BACK. BACK BEFORE I HAD A SOUL--

--THOUGH I SHOULD PROBABLY SKIP MOST OF THAT IF I EXPECT YOU TO BELIEVE ME--

--SUFFICE IT TO SAY I'D DO PRETTY MUCH ANYTHING TO KEEP HER SAFE.

LIKE PUT UP WITH YOUR BLOODY CRAP PILOTING.

SO YOU *KNOW* EACH OTHER?

WHAT'S IT TO YOU?

THE NITOBE HAVE A CODE FOR MATING.

HUMANS ARE NOT ALLOWED.

WELL, LANCELOT, LET'S SKIP THE BIRDS AND THE BEES AND THE UNDEAD TALK 'CAUSE WE HAVE A SLAYER TO FIND.

THINGS ARE NOT AS YOU'D LIKE THEM WITH THE SLAYER.

SORRY IF YOU'RE LOOKING FOR A SUPERNATURAL SOAP, BUT THERE'S NOTHING SUDSY TO TELL HERE.

AFTER EVERYTHING THAT BUFFY'S BEEN THROUGH, SHE NEEDS ONE THING. AND THAT'S NORMAL.

WHICH I AM DECIDEDLY *NOT.*

WHAT IS THAT?

THE REASON BUFFY'S NOT ANSWERING MY TEXTS.

I DON'T CARE WHETHER OR NOT THEY'VE TRAINED FOR THIS.

I NEED A S.W.A.T. TEAM DOWN HERE IN THE NEXT TEN MINUTES.

YOU SURE THAT'S NOT OVERKILL?

YOU'VE READ THE REPORTS. YOU KNOW WHAT A SLAYER IS CAPABLE OF.

CHEUNG, LET ME GO IN. I CAN TALK TO HER.

YOU'VE GOT AS LONG AS IT TAKES FOR S.W.A.T. TO GET HERE!

YOU HEAR THAT?

WE'VE GOT COMPANY.

THEN I BETTER HURRY UP.

THE POLICE ARE LOOKING FOR *YOU.* THEY DON'T EVEN KNOW I EXIST.

YOU THINK THIS HURTS NOW...

AHHH--

...IMAGINE HOW STRONG I'LL BE AFTER I TAKE YOUR MOJO.

MORE POWER THAN HUNDREDS OF VAMPIRES.

AHH--

HOW DO YOU LIKE *THAT* SLAYER MOJO?

ALL THE POWER I'VE SUCKED UP...

YOU THINK A TOOTHPICK WILL STOP ME?

I'M GUESSING YOU CAN'T DO THAT MYSTICAL FIRST-AID THINGIE WITHOUT CHARGING UP.

AND YOU ALREADY ZAPPED ALL THE ZOMPIRES.

I'VE JUST GOT TO KEEP WITH THE FIGHTY UNTIL YOU USE UP ALL YOUR SNAP, CRACKLE, AND POP.

SNAP

CRACKLE

POP

DON'T WORRY.

I MADE SURE I WON'T RUN OUT.

...AS POLICE SURROUND THE BUILDING WHERE THE ALLEGED "SLAYER," BUFFY SUMMERS, IS HIDING...

WHAT A REFRESHING CHANGE OF PACE.

BUFFY DIDN'T TAKE OUR ADVICE AND TRY TO WORK IT OUT WITH THE POLICE.

I'LL CALL WILL.

HOW MUCH BAIL DO YOU THINK WE'RE GOING TO NEED?

ANA-I'M-HAVING-TROUBLE-REMEMBERING-THE-REST-OF-YOUR-NAME-BECAUSE-OUR-ROOMIE-IS-ON-T.V.!

FORGET THE T.V. YOU NEED TO GET IN HERE.

VAMP!

THE NEWCAST IS RIGHT...

"...AND SHE'S NOT REALLY TRYING HARD TO HIDE IT..."

MS. SUMMERS?

IT'S DETECTIVE DOWLING. I'M COMING IN. WE CAN WORK THIS OUT.

BUFFY...

PAFT

GONNA BE HARD TO STEAL MY POWERS IF I'M DEAD...

YOU'RE RIGHT.

HEY, VAMP CREEPS--

DOUBLE GULP.

FACE IT, BUFFY...

YOU'RE NEVER GOING TO BE ABLE TO STOP ME.

WORD OF CAUTION, MATE.

BUFFY WON'T TAKE KINDLY TO YOU POINTING THAT THING AT HER.

IN FACT, I DON'T REALLY LIKE IT.

WHERE IS SHE?

WHAT THE HELL--

WE'RE TRYING TO SAVE BUFFY FROM THE LOON WHO DROPPED ALL THESE VAMPS.

SO IF YOU WANT TO LIVE, YOU'D BEST RUN OUTSIDE AND TELL YOUR BOYS IN BLUE TO GO HOME AND LET US HANDLE IT.

YEAH...

CRASH

THE SIPHON--

BUFFY!

REMINDS ME OF WHAT I HAD TO DO TO MY GIRLFRIEND BECAUSE OF *YOU.*

WOW...

...THAT SPARKS *DIFFERENT.*

WHY DON'T YOU PICK ON SOME NASTIES YOUR OWN SIZE?

THEY CAN'T STOP ME.

FWASH

YOU THINK I'M SCARED OF A WORN-OUT VAMPIRE...

SPIKE...

...DON'T...

BUFFY...

THAT'S RIGHT! IN *TWO* SECONDS, *THIS* ONE'LL BE A CORPSE--

AND ALL OF YOUR--

BOOM BOOM BOOM

--POWER--

GOOD LUCK HEALING THOSE--

YOU OKAY?

NOTHING A FORTY-EIGHT-HOUR NAP WON'T FIX.

IF YOU HADN'T FIGURED OUT WHAT WAS GOING ON...

...I'D JUST BE BUFFY THE BARISTA.

AND WE'D BE SHIPPING YOUR VAMPIRE FRIEND ACROSS THE POND IN A BODY BAG.

I TALKED TO MY SUPERVISORS.

YOU'RE NOT GOING TO GET A PUBLIC APOLOGY, BUT YOU ARE OFF OUR MOST-WANTED LIST.

YIPPEE.

AND THIS IS PROBABLY THE ONLY TIME ANYONE WILL HEAR ME SAY THIS--

--BUT THANK YOU FOR SHOWING UP GUN A-BLAZING.

YOU FACED DEATH TO SAVE HER. SHE WILL WANT TO SPEAK TO YOU.

MAYBE.

BUT I ALREADY TOLD YOU...

YOU WANT HER TO BE WITH WHAT THIS REALM CALLS NORMAL.

NEED A RIDE HOME?

I CAN GET ONE OF THE OFFICERS TO DRIVE YOU.

I'VE GOT IT COVERED.

CALL ME AFTER YOU'VE GOTTEN SOME SLEEP. WE'RE GOING TO HAVE A LOT OF QUESTIONS FOR YOU.

WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE?

SPIKE WAS GROUP TEXTING ABOUT YOU AND FIREWORKS AND SOME KIND OF MYSTICAL SIPHON.

AS A MAGICAL HAVE-NOT...

I WANTED TO BE HERE IN CASE YOU JOINED THE NO-POWERS CLUB. I THOUGHT YOU MIGHT NEED A MAGICK-FREE SHOULDER TO CRY ON.

NOPE. STILL A SLAYER.

...UNLESS THAT MEANS YOU DON'T WANT TO GIVE ME A RIDE HOME.

BUFFY, I WAS NEVER MAD BECAUSE YOU HAD POWER AND I DIDN'T.

RIGHT. IT'S BECAUSE I DESTROYED THE SEED WITHOUT THINKING ABOUT THE FALLOUT.

IF IT'S ANY CONSOLATION, THE FALLOUT TRIED TO TURN ME INTO HIS OWN PERSONAL DURACELL.

KIA

I'M GLAD HE DIDN'T.

I'D HATE FOR YOU TO KNOW WHAT IT'S LIKE TO LOSE THE THING THAT MAKES YOU TICK.

YOUR MAGIC, WILL...

WE'LL FIGURE IT OUT. I PROMISE.

YOU BLEW IT.

I'M SORRY...

DON'T TOUCH ME.

I GOT SHOT. THREE TIMES. I NEED TO RECHARGE--

JUST A TASTE!

SORRY. BUT YOU DIDN'T LEAVE BUFFY POWERLESS...

SO NOW I'M GOING TO NEED ALL OF *MY* POWER TO KILL HER...

CRAFT: [illegible]
CREW: 2 HUMANS (1 DEAD), 23 INSECTS (1 DEAD)

COURSE: SOMEPLACE NICE FOR BUFFY'S VACATION

IN SPACE NO ONE CAN HEAR YOU SLAY

FIRST LONG WEEKEND I HAVE FROM POURING COFFEE IN THREE MONTHS AND I END UP HERE.

SPIKE SOLD ME ON A **SPACE-CATION** SO I COULD SEE SOMETHING SPECTACULAR. A COMET. SUPERNOVA. **WHITE DWARF.** PRETTY SURE I SLAYED **THAT** GUY IN THE ENCHANTED FOREST.

ANYTHING TO MAKE ME FORGET SAN FRANCISCO AND WHAT PASSES FOR VAMPIRES THESE DAYS...

SO WHY AM I STUCK ON A SHIP WITH A GIANT, BLOODTHIRSTY SPACE BUG?

HE SUCKS BLOOD?!

HE'S A *MOSQUITO*?!

HE AIN'T A BLOODY MOSQUITO.

--THOUGH I UNDERSTAND THE CONFUSION.

IRENE'S NOW A MULTIHYPHENATED SPACE-BUG-ZOMPIRE-THING. TURNS OUT YOU LOT REACT EVEN WORSE TO BEING SIRED THAN POST-SEED *HUMANS* DO.

EVEN *I'M* GETTING CONFUSED.

POINT IS, YOU BUGGIES SHOULD HAVE KNOWN BETTER THAN TO HAVE TAKEN *SHORE LEAVE* IN THE HAIGHT AFTER DARK.

AND YOU DEFINITELY SHOULDN'T'VE BROUGHT IRENE'S CARCASS BACK ON BOARD.

A-DECK CLEAR.

BUT I COULD REALLY USE SOMETHING SHARP, POINTY, AND PREFERABLY MADE OF WOOD.

YOU AIN'T GONNA FIND ANYTHING LIKE THAT ABOARD THE S.S. INFESTATION--

THESE GUYS ARE DISTANT COUSINS OF TERMITES.

IT'S OKAY. A SLAYER ALWAYS COMES PREPARED--

OKAY. WHO TOOK BUFFY'S STAKES?

CRUNCHCRUNCH CRUNCHCRUNCH CRUN...

SIRE, WHEN YOU TOLD US WE HAD TO HUDDLE IN YOUR STATEROOM, WE DIDN'T KNOW HOW LONG IT WOULD BE UNTIL OUR NEXT MEAL.

IF YOU CAN GET TO MY STORAGE LOCKER YOU'LL FIND A CAN OF...

...B-U-G-S-P-R-A-Y.

DID YOU SAY *BUG SPRAY?!*

YOU HAVE BUG SPRAY!

ARE YOU TRYING TO *KILL* US?!

KING SPIKE WANTS TO COMMIT INSECTICIDE!

IT'S FOR THE CREEPY-CRAWLIES THAT *DON'T* TALK BACK.

AND SINCE WHEN CAN YOU BUGGERS *SPELL?*

COLIN'S MISSING.

HE WENT TO THE LITTLE GRUB'S ROOM.

BLOODY HELL.

BUFFY, WE'VE GOT AN INSECT WHO'S GONE MISSING.

WE'RE GONNA NEED A BIGGER CAN.

I WASN'T TALKING ABOUT *SPRAYING* HIM, LUV.

CHECK THE POCKET OF MY SPARE JACKET. SHOULD BE A LIGHTER.

FIC

FIC

FIS

FWOOSH

OKAY, WHO WANTS TO GET CRISPY?

COLIN?!

I'M ON THE BUG ZOMP'S TAIL.

CCRUNCHH

AND ITS LEG. AND ITS ABDOMEN.

HE'S MOLTING.

BUFFY, DO ME A FAVOR--

SQUASH THAT BUG-PIRE.

NOT A PROBLEM.

GRRRRRRR!

FWOOOSH

I'VE GOT HIM CORNERED IN THE *SOLARIUM!*

CAREFUL, LUV. THESE BUGS ARE SNEAKY--

YEP. HE'S GOT ME CORNERED.

BAP

WOK

GRRRRRRR!

...SOLARIUM?!

AND I THOUGHT SPIKE LOOKED BAD IN BUMPY-FACE.

CLICK

KCHUNK

PAFT

SPIKE WAS RIGHT.

IT IS SPECTACULAR.

I'VE SEEN WORSE...

I'LL TAKE THE ONE ON THE LEFT. YOU GET THE REST.

SLAYER

INTERRUPTED

GRRAAARRRRRR

YOUR KEY, BUFFY!

IF WE'RE STUCK IN A *ZOMBIE MOVIE*, WHY DON'T I HAVE A *SHOTGUN*?

BECAUSE THIS ISN'T A *MOVIE*.

POOF!

LAST ONE IN IS A ROTTEN ZOMPIRE!

Baff!

WE MADE IT.

GRRRRRRRRR

XANDER...?

DAWN...?

GRRRRRRRRR

GRRRRRRRRR

OOOF--

GRRRRRRRRR

GRRRRRRRRR

Paft!

NO--!

Paft!

YOU ARE NOT THE SLAYER.

IT'S OKAY, BUFFY. IT'S JUST A SLAYER DREAM.

AND YOU DUSTED MY SISTER AND HER BOYFRIEND!

WHO HAPPENS TO BE MY BEST FRIEND!

BAM

I'VE HAD SLAYER DREAMS BEFORE...

...BUT NEVER ONE THAT PUNCHED ME IN THE GUT.

BLECH

YOU ACTUALLY *FELT* IT?

ENOUGH TO MAKE ME GO ALL BLECHY.

DID YOU TALK TO ANY OF THE OTHER SLAYERS? MAYBE THEY HAD THE SAME DREAM.

I'M AFRAID TO ASK. IT'S NOT LIKE THEY'RE LINING UP TO TALK TO ME. THE CLOSEST SLAYER I HAVE TO A FRIEND IS KENNEDY...

...AND, WELL, SHE STILL BLAMES ME FOR YOU DUMPING HER.

BECAUSE YOU DESTROYED THE SEED, WHICH MADE ME GO MAGIC FREE, WHICH MADE ME DUMP HER?

THAT'S SEVERAL DEGREES OF HOLDING A GRUDGE.

WHAT DID THE FIRST SLAYER SAY TO YOU IN YOUR DREAM?

AFTER SHE DUSTED XANDER AND DAWNIE...

...WHICH, SIDEBAR, WAS ITS OWN PUNCH IN THE GUT...

SHE SAID, "YOU ARE NOT THE SLAYER."

EVEN THE FIRST SLAYER IS GETTING GRUDGEY.

OR MAYBE SHE WAS TRYING TO TELL ME THAT I COULD LOSE MY POWERS BECAUSE THE SEED IS GONE.

I DON'T THINK SO.

THAT'S NOT HOW THE SEED WORKS. YOUR POWER COMES FROM INSIDE YOU.

BUT SHE MUST BE TRYING TO TELL ME SOMETHING IMPORTANT.

SHE WOULDN'T HAVE KILLED XANDER AND DAWN UNLESS SHE REALLY WANTED TO GET MY ATTENTION.

I WISH I HAD SOME ANSWERS.

BUT RIGHT NOW I'VE GOT TO GET BACK TO THE EXCITING WORLD OF COMPUTER PROGRAMMING.

ME TOO. BUT MY WORLD INVOLVES COFFEE. AND POURING.

DID YOU EVER THINK OF LOOKING IN THE BOOK GILES LEFT YOU?

VAMPYR

VAMPYR

I MISS GILES.
VAMPYR

I REALLY MISS GILES.

YOU ARE NOT THE SLAYER.

I KNEW I SHOULD HAVE OVER-CAFFEINATED.

WHAT ARE YOU TRYING TO TELL ME?

WAIT--

YOU WANT ME TO SLAY THEM?

GRARRARARARRR

ARAR

BUT IT'S BROKEN.

ONLY THE SLAYER CAN PULL THE BLADE FROM THE GROUND.

YOU ARE NOT THE SLAYER.

YOU'RE NOT MAKING SENSE HERE. EVEN FOR A DREAM.

DO YOU WANT ME TO GET THE SCYTHE OR NOT?

AND SINCE WHEN ARE YOU SO CHATTY?

BAM

YOU'RE NOT THE SLAYER, EITHER!

"SOMEONE'S HIJACKING MY DREAMS."

SO THEY AREN'T OF THE SLAYER VARIETY?

YES AND NO.

I THINK I'M HAVING SLAYER DREAMS THAT SOMEONE'S SNEAKING INTO.

IS GRAND THEFT *DREAM* EVEN POSSIBLE WITHOUT THE M-WORD?

I'M NOT SURE. I FOUND ONE PAGE IN GILES'S BOOK ABOUT SLAYER DREAMS...

...WHICH I MAY OR MAY NOT HAVE DROOLED ON...

SO NOW IT'S KIND OF HARD TO READ.

BUT HOWEVER IT'S HAPPENING, I THINK I'M GETTING *TWO* MESSAGES.

ONE FROM THE SLAYER LINE.

AND ONE FROM THE PERSON WHO HACKED MY BRAIN.

AND SHE LOOKS LIKE TINKERBELL.

I THINK SHE'S THE ONE TELLING ME THAT I'M *NOT* A SLAYER.

THERE'S ONE WAY TO FIGURE THIS OUT, BUFFY.

YOU NEED TO GET YOUR SLEEP ON.

EXTRA PILLOWS, COFFEE SO I DON'T FALL ASLEEP, AND SOME MIDNIGHT MUNCHIES.
IT'S LIKE A SLUMBER PARTY.
WHICH WE'RE NOT GOING TO TELL MY GIRLFRIEND ABOUT.
I MISS THIS.
THE POPCORN, THE GIRL TALK, OR THE POSSIBILITY OF A PILLOW FIGHT?
HANGING OUT WITH MY BESTIE.
I DIDN'T KNOW IF WE WERE STILL USING THAT QUALIFIER.
I KNOW SLAYER DREAMS CAN BE INTENSE.
IF YOU LOOK LIKE YOU'RE IN DISTRESS, I'LL WAKE YOU UP.
ONLY IF IT'S NECESSARY. OR WE MIGHT HAVE TO DO THIS ALL OVER AGAIN TOMORROW NIGHT.

BUFFY--

WHO ARE YOU?

YOU COULDN'T PRONOUNCE MY NAME. EVEN ON THIS SIDE OF DREAMING.

I LAY DREAM EGGS IN PEOPLE'S EARS. NIGHTMARES, TOO. BUT WITHOUT THE SEED, MY POWERS HAVE WEAKENED.

I NEEDED TO RIDE IN ON SOMEONE ELSE'S DREAM WAVE TO TALK TO YOU.

I CAME THROUGH *HER.*

WHAT'S WITH THE WINGS AND THE NEVERLAND WARDROBE? LAST TIME, YOU LOOKED LIKE THE SLAYER.

I NO LONGER NEED TO DISGUISE MYSELF FROM YOUR SUBCONSCIOUS.

FOLLOW HER.

WHY ARE *YOU* HERE? WHY DID YOU SNEAK INTO MY HEAD?

I CAME TO PUNISH YOU.

LET ME GUESS. BECAUSE I DESTROYED THE SEED?

I THOUGHT I SAW THE REAL BUFFY SUMMERS DIE FIGHTING YAMANH IN THE UNDERWORLD, SO I THOUGHT YOU MUST BE AN IMPOSTOR. BUT ONCE I GOT INSIDE YOUR HEAD, I REALIZED...

SHE WAS IMPERSONATING *YOU*...

ONE OF MY DOUBLES?

SHE DIED KEEPING THE DEMONS FROM THE SURFACE.

I KNOW!

SO WHY ARE YOU INTERRUPTING MY PREVIOUSLY SCHEDULED DREAM IF YOU'RE NOT GOING TO PUNISH ME?

GRRRRRRRRR!

WHEN I WAS PLANNING THE NIGHTMARES TO PLACE IN YOUR HEAD...

I DISCOVERED SOMETHING YOU NEED TO KNOW.

Kaff!

VAMPIRES WILL KEEP COMING UNTIL YOU GIVE THE FIRST SLAYER YOUR ATTENTION.

THIS IS *HER* DREAM. FIGURE OUT WHAT SHE WANTS.

THEN I'LL TELL YOU WHAT I KNOW.

WELL, NOW I KNOW WHAT THE FIRST SLAYER WANTED TO TELL ME.

EVERYTHING THAT'S HAPPENED SINCE I DESTROYED THE SEED IS *MY* FAULT.

THAT'S NOT WHAT SHE'S TELLING YOU.

IT'S NOT ABOUT SELF-PITY.

IT'S BARELY ABOUT YOU.

DO I HAVE TO INTERPRET EVERYTHING?

IT'S SIMPLE DREAMING. SHE WANTS YOU TO UNDO WHAT YOU DID TO THIS WORLD.

HOW DO I DO THAT?

UNLOCK THE KEY!

THE SCYTHE!

WHY DOES THE FIRST SLAYER KEEP BRINGING ME HERE IF I CAN'T BUDGE IT?

IT'S NOT FOR YOU.

IT'S FOR HER.

WHY ARE YOU IN MY SLAYER DREAM?

TINK, WHY IS SHE IN MY SLAYER DREAM?

THE SCYTHE COULD BE THE KEY TO RESTORING MAGIC TO THE WORLD.

AM I SUPPOSED TO GIVE IT TO YOU WHEN I WAKE UP?

I THINK SO... I NEED TO GO AWAY, AND I NEED TO TAKE THE SCYTHE WITH ME.

IT'S GOING TO BE A LONG TRIP...

I DON'T WANT YOU TO GO. THINGS ARE STARTING TO GET BETTER.

THERE'S SO MUCH I'M FIGURING OUT ABOUT MY LIFE RIGHT NOW...

I NEED YOU.

IF YOU LOVE SOMETHING...

...SET IT FREE.

SO THIS IS GOODBYE?

THIS IS JUST A DREAM, BUFFY.

BUT IT FEELS SO REAL.

THE FIRST SLAYER IS SATISFIED.

SO START TALKING.

WHAT DO *YOU* NEED TO TELL ME?

LIKE I SAID, YOU AREN'T THE SLAYER.

THE SLAYER'S A PART OF YOU. BUT YOU'RE NOT A GIRL ANYMORE.

CAN ANYONE HERE JUST SAY WHAT THEY MEAN?

DREAMS HAVE A WAY OF LOSING THEMSELVES IN TRANSLATION.

OKAY. I GOT YOUR VAGUE AND CRYPTIC MESSAGE. AND I UNDERSTAND WHAT THE FIRST SLAYER NEEDS ME TO DO.

SO CAN I WAKE UP NOW?

I HAVE A FRIEND WHO WILL BE VERY HAPPY TO KNOW THAT SHE DOESN'T HAVE TO BE MAGICALLY IMPAIRED.

YOU DON'T HAVE TO TELL HER. SHE KNOWS. YOU SHARE A DEEP BOND. YOUR DREAM SPACES BLEED TOGETHER.

SO THE COFFEE DIDN'T WORK?

WILLOW FELL ASLEEP?

WILLOW *WAS* HERE.

AND THAT *WAS* GOODBYE.

WILL--

THE SCYTHE!

Buffy, the world needs magic. You know why I had to go. No use saying goodbye twice. I love you. Dillon

I WOULDN'T HAVE MINDED A DOUBLE GOODBYE.

WILL...

BUT I CAN HANDLE THIS.

BECAUSE THE FAERIE WAS RIGHT. I'M NOT A GIRL ANYMORE.

UMMM... BUFFY, WE NEED TO TALK.

SORRY. CAN'T.

BUT WE KNOW YOU'RE A SLAYER.

Yam!

EVERYONE KNOWS I'M A SLAYER. I WAS ON T.V.

ANAHEED AND I WERE TALKING...AND WE DON'T THINK IT'S SAFE TO LIVE WITH YOU.

CAN THIS WAIT?

UMMM... SURE... YEAH...

THEY'RE ALREADY SCARED OF ME.

BECAUSE I'M A SLAYER.

BUT THAT'S OKAY...

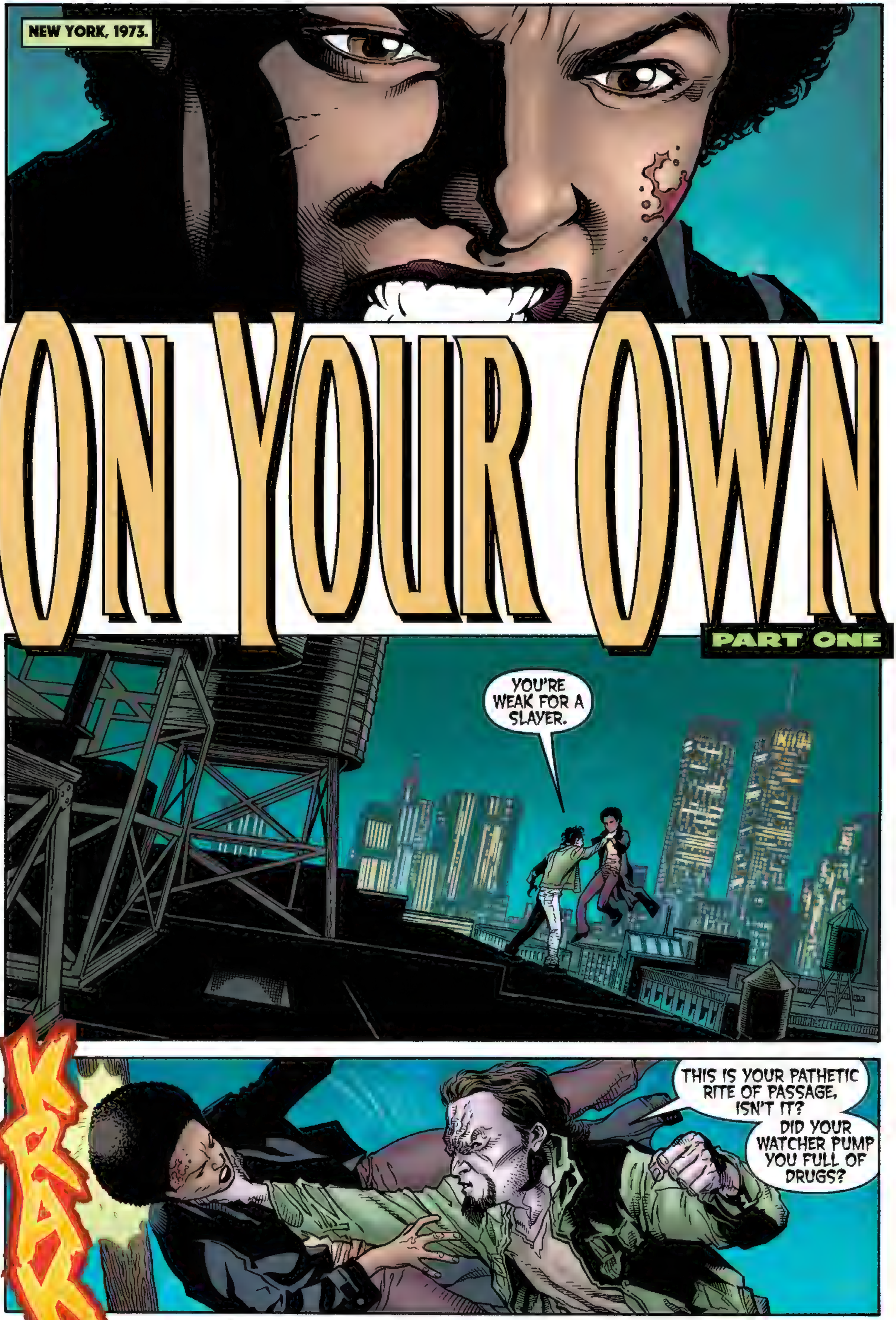
BECAUSE I'M SCARED TOO.

Pregnant⊕
Not Pregnant⊖

noto

ON YOUR OWN

PART ONE



I CAN SMELL THE SEDATIVES...

...AND THE BLOOD OF SOMEONE ELSE.

YOU'RE WITH CHILD.

AND YOU'RE DEAD.

YOU CAN'T KILL ME.

BUT I CAN KILL BOTH OF--

SNAP

PAFT

I *TOLD* THE COUNCIL THEY WERE INSANE!

I SURVIVED.

BUT TO INITIATE YOUR CRUCIAMENTUM WHEN YOU'RE IN SUCH A DELICATE CONDITION!

ALL SLAYERS GO THROUGH IT WHEN THEY TURN EIGHTEEN.

I CAN'T SHIRK THE MISSION JUST BECAUSE MY LIFE GOT IN THE WAY.

HOW DID YOU MANAGE *THIS* WITHOUT YOUR STRENGTH?

HE THREATENED MY BABY.

HAVE YOU DECIDED WHAT YOU'RE GOING TO DO ABOUT THE CHILD?

I HAVE NO IDEA.

IN THE MEANTIME, WILL YOU AT LEAST TELL ME...

"...WHO THE FATHER IS?"

I HAVE NO IDEA.

IT'S OKAY.

THE LIST OF POTENTIAL FATHERS CAN'T BE THAT LONG.

REMEMBER HOW MANY GUYS WERE AT MY HOUSE-WARMING PARTY?

I REMEMBER THE COPS TRIED TO SHUT IT DOWN BECAUSE THE PARTY GOT TOO CROWDED.

THE LIST IS JUST AS CROWDED.

MAYBE YOU DIDN'T GET PREGNANT THAT NIGHT.

IT'S NOT LIKE I'VE BEEN GETTING MUCH *NON*-SLAYER ACTION LATELY.

IT HAD TO HAVE HAPPENED AT THE PARTY WHEN I...

...BLACKED OUT.

WE'VE ALL BEEN THERE, BUFF. IF IT WEREN'T FOR ALCOHOL, I WOULDN'T HAVE ENDED UP A GIANT, A CENTAUR, OR A DOLL...

DO YOU REMEMBER BEING ALONE WITH ANYONE AT THE PARTY?

IS A VAMP BABY DADDY EVEN POSSIBLE?

NORMALLY, I'D SAY NO...

BUT SINCE I DESTROYED THE SEED, THE VAMPIRE RULE BOOK IS BEING REWRITTEN.

IT'S A LITTLE HAZY... BUT, RILEY, WHO'S MARRIED. ANDREW, WHOSE NAME I'M NOT SURE WHY I'M SAYING.

ROOT, WHO DOESN'T SHOWER. TUMBLE, WHO SHOWERS INFREQUENTLY. THE SHUT-IN NEIGHBOR, WHOSE NAME I CAN'T REMEMBER. AND THEN THERE'S SPIKE.

AND THOSE ARE JUST THE GUYS I KNEW AT THE PARTY.

SO NO MATTER WHO IT IS...

I THINK I'M ON MY OWN.

YOU'VE GOT ME.

AND XANDER.

DO YOU THINK WILLOW'S STILL IN THIS TIME ZONE?

I TRIED CALLING HER YESTERDAY BUT HER CELL WAS DISCONNECTED.

YOU KNOW WHAT?

THE FEWER PEOPLE I TALK TO ABOUT THIS THE BETTER.

I BROUGHT PAJAMAS, HIGHLY PROCESSED SNACK FOODS, AND I'M PLANNING ON SKIPPING ALL MY CLASSES UNTIL WE FIGURE OUT A PLAN OF ATTACK.

THANKS, DAWNIE.

BUT I THINK THERE'S SOMEONE ELSE I NEED TO TALK TO FIRST.

SPIKE. IT'S DETECTIVE DOWLING.

BUFFY SAID YOU'D MEET ME...

...AT THE EMBARCADERO...

RIGHT HERE, MATE.

WE GOING TO DO THIS RIDE ALONG OR NOT?

THERE'S A LOT I DON'T KNOW ABOUT VAMPIRES.

OH, WE DON'T ALL HAVE SPACESHIPS.

"YOU MUST HAVE SOME IDEA WHO THE FATHER IS..."

...MAYBE HE COULD RAISE THE BABY.
CROWLEY...
YOU KNOW WHAT I DO. YOU KNOW I SEE BAD STUFF.
WHEN I BLOW OFF STEAM...
...I DON'T ALWAYS COLLECT NAMES.
IF YOU GO THROUGH WITH THIS...
YOU'RE ONLY GOING TO HURT THAT CHILD.

MAYBE.

BUT YOU SAW WHAT I DID TODAY WHEN THAT VAMP THREATENED MY BABY. I DUG DOWN DEEP AND FOUGHT BACK.

THE BABY COULD BE MY REASON TO FIGHT.

IF YOU PUT THAT BURDEN ON A CHILD, NIKKI...

"...HE WILL BLAME YOU FOR THE REST OF HIS LIFE."

IF YOU WANT AN EASY ANSWER, YOU WON'T GET IT FROM ME.

I DON'T WANT AN EASY ANSWER. I JUST WANT TO KNOW.

WHAT'S IT LIKE TO GROW UP WITH A SLAYER AS A MOTHER?

I LEARNED ABOUT DEMONS AND VAMPIRES WHEN MOST KIDS STILL BELIEVED IN THE TOOTH FAIRY. I WAS CLOSER TO HER WATCHER THAN I WAS TO MY OWN MOTHER. IF I WAS LUCKY, SHE'D TAKE ME TO PATROL WITH HER...

...BECAUSE THE WORST PART WAS LYING IN BED AND WAITING FOR HER TO COME HOME. IT ALWAYS TOOK LONGER THAN SHE SAID. LONGER THAN I THOUGHT IT WOULD. BUT SHE ALWAYS CAME HOME...

...UNTIL ONE NIGHT SHE *DIDN'T.*

...THE NIGHT SPIKE KILLED HER...

I GUESS IT'S OBVIOUS WHAT I SHOULD DO.

I DON'T THINK IT IS.

WHAT DO YOU MEAN?

YOU GREW UP RESENTING WHAT NIKKI DID TO YOU. I CAN'T PUT A KID THROUGH THAT.

I KNOW.

BUT I'M *HERE* BECAUSE NIKKI DECIDED TO HAVE ME.

I THINK YOU SHOULD CONSIDER HAVING THE BABY.

PAFT

PAFT

OOOF--

PAFT

WHO SAYS SLAYERS ARE THE ONLY ONES GOOD WITH A STAKE?

CROWLEY--

PAFT

PAFT

ARE YOU OKAY?

YEAH. WE'RE FINE. WHAT ABOUT *YOU*?

FOR A WATCHER, YOU'RE DOING A LOT MORE THAN WATCHING.

I DIDN'T THINK YOU EVER CAME OUTSIDE TO PLAY WITH SHARP POINTY OBJECTS.

YOU DIDN'T LEAVE ME ANY CHOICE. WHY ARE *YOU* PATROLLING?

IT'S THE MISSION, CROWLEY.

WHY DO YOU THINK I RENTED YOU A CABIN UPSTATE?

YOU'RE SUPPOSED TO STAY THERE UNTIL THE BABY'S BORN.

WHAT'S THE COUNCIL HAVE TO SAY ABOUT THAT?

THE COUNCIL DOESN'T KNOW.

THEY'LL KNOW WHEN VAMPIRES GO UNSLAYED.

I'VE BEEN TRAINING. I'VE MADE WEAPONS. I'LL COVER FOR YOU UNTIL HE'S BORN...

...UNTIL YOU DECIDE TO GIVE HIM TO A FAMILY WHO CAN PROVIDE HIM WITH A BETTER LIFE.

DO I REALLY HAVE TO WEAR A BLOODY STRAIT-JACKET?

DEPARTMENT POLICY.

SFPD

FP

LESSON ONE. VAMPIRES ARE ALREADY DEAD.

LET'S SKIP TO THE PART WHERE YOU TEACH ME HOW TO MAKE THEM GO UP IN DUST.

IS THERE A NEST NEARBY?

YOU AIN'T CLOSE TO READY FOR A NEST, MATE. FORTUNATELY FOR YOU, THE LAST NEST YOU WENT INTO HAD ALREADY BEEN CLEANED OUT.

SO WE WAIT FOR A *ZOMPIRE* TO SHOW UP?

SOMETHING NASTY WILL BE COMING ALONG FOR HIS DINNER SOON ENOUGH.

WANNA TELL ME HOW YOU BECAME FRIENDS WITH A SLAYER?

LONG STORY, MATE.

AND THAT'S NOT WHAT TONIGHT'S ABOUT.

I'M HERE TO LEARN ABOUT ALL THINGS VAMPIRE.

I THINK A SLAYER/VAMPIRE ALLIANCE FALLS UNDER *EXACTLY* WHAT TONIGHT'S ABOUT.

ALL RIGHT, IF YOU HAVE TO KNOW.

I TRIED TO KILL BUFFY, I FAILED, I HAD A CHIP IMPLANTED IN MY HEAD SO I COULDN'T, I HAD A THING WITH A ROBOT BUFFY, THEN I HAD A THING WITH THE REAL BUFFY, I GOT MY SOUL BACK, AND BUFFY AND I WENT OUR SEPARATE WAYS.

WE'RE GOING TO HAVE TO SCHEDULE ANOTHER RIDE ALONG...

ARE YOU TWO STILL...

BUFFY ONLY COMES TO ME WHEN SHE NEEDS DARK.

WHY YOU ASKING?

YOU FANCY HER?

'CAUSE THERE'S NOTHING I'D LIKE MORE THAN TO SEE HER WITH SOMEONE LIKE YOU.

CLUELESS ABOUT THINGS THAT GO BUMP IN THE NIGHT.

BUFFY SHOULDN'T DATE A COP.

I SEE A LOT OF BAD STUFF. IT'S HARD NOT TO BRING THAT HOME.

YOU THINK YOUR BOYS-IN-BLUE STORIES HAVE A *PATCH* ON THE SUPERNATURAL HORRORS BUFFY'S SEEN?

TRUST ME, SHE'S A BIG GIRL. SHE CAN HANDLE WHATEVER *YOU* THROW AT HER.

ON SECOND THOUGHT, YOU'RE THE ONE I'D WORRY ABOUT.

WHY *DIDN'T* NIKKI GIVE YOU UP FOR ADOPTION?

BEFORE I WAS BORN, CROWLEY SAID SHE PUT UP WALLS WITH EVERYONE SHE CAME IN CONTACT WITH.

BEEN THERE. DONE THAT.

NO STOPPING ANY TIME

COLUMBUS AV

BUT YOU KNOW THAT.

JACK KEROUAC (ADLER)

NO PARKING 7 AM - 10 AM TUESDAY & WEDNESDAY

NO PARKING 8AM-6PM MON - FRI

PSYCHIC PALM TAROT CA READINGS

GROWING UP, I NEVER SAW ANY GUY STICK AROUND FOR MORE THAN A COUPLE WEEKS.

BUT HERE I WAS...

...SOMEONE WHO WAS ALREADY ON THE INSIDE OF HER WALL.

IT WOULD HAVE KILLED NIKKI TO WALK AWAY FROM YOU.

THAT'S THE THING, BUFFY.

SHE DIDN'T HAVE TO WALK AWAY FROM *ME.*

"SHE COULD HAVE WALKED AWAY FROM SLAYING."

I NAMED HIM ROBIN.

HE'S BEAUTIFUL, NIKKI.

I DON'T WANT TO GO BACK.

YOU DON'T HAVE TO.

WHAT ARE WE GOING TO TELL THE COUNCIL?

I'LL DEAL WITH THE COUNCIL.

BUT THE MISSION--

YOU'VE BEEN LIVING THE MISSION FOR THREE YEARS. MOST SLAYERS DON'T MAKE IT HALF THAT LONG.

YOU'VE KILLED COUNTLESS VAMPIRES. SAVED HUNDREDS OF LIVES.

YOU CAN WALK AWAY. AND *NO ONE* WILL BLAME YOU.

NOT IF YOU DO IT FOR HIM.

REALLY?

PASSPORTS AND TICKETS.

WHEN THE DOCTORS LET YOU OUT OF HERE, DON'T COME BACK. JUST LEAVE. BE A FAMILY.

DID YOU HEAR THAT, ROBIN?

WE'RE GOING TO BE A FAMILY.

IF SHE HAD AN OUT, WHY DID SHE COME BACK?

WE LIVED IN SOUTH AMERICA FOR A BIT. MEXICO, TOO, I THINK.

BUT SHE GOT AN ITCH BEFORE I WAS EVEN A YEAR OLD.

AND WE ENDED UP RIGHT BACK WHERE CROWLEY DIDN'T WANT US.

NEW YORK?

PATROLLING WHILE I WAITED FOR THE NIGHT SHE DIDN'T COME HOME.

IT TOOK ME A LONG TIME TO REALIZE WHY.

SHE WAS CHOSEN, BUFFY. JUST LIKE YOU.

NO MATTER WHERE SHE WENT. NO MATTER HOW MUCH SHE WANTED TO BE WITH ME.

SHE WASN'T STRONG ENOUGH TO IGNORE IT.

SHE HAD TO BE A SLAYER.

I DON'T GET IT.

WHERE'S THE PART OF THE STORY THAT MAKES YOU THINK I SHOULD HAVE A KID?

LILY

TOYOTA

RIGHT IN FRONT OF ME, BUFFY.

YOU AREN'T MY MOTHER. YOU'VE DONE THINGS SHE NEVER COULD.

YOU'VE SAVED THE WORLD MORE TIMES THAN I CAN COUNT. AND YOU RAISED YOUR SISTER WHILE DOING IT. THEN YOU LED AN *ARMY* OF SLAYERS.

THAT'S WHY I THINK YOU CAN HAVE THIS BABY.

THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN YOU AND NIKKI IS...

WHEN THINGS GET TOUGH, YOU LET PEOPLE HELP.

SO IF YOU DECIDE TO HAVE THAT BABY...

...DON'T DO IT BY YOURSELF.

DON'T WORRY. I WON'T.

BZZZZ

GIVE ME A LIFT, MATE.

SFPD

FBI

WHAT'S WRONG?

ZOMPIRES?

BUFFY. SHE NEEDS HELP.

NOTHING THAT FUN. SHE WANTS TO TALK.

YOU GOING TO TELL HER HOW YOU REALLY FEEL ABOUT HER, OR ARE YOU GOING TO BOTTLE IT UP UNTIL BUFFY'S TOO OLD TO CARE?

WHAT ARE YOU ON ABOUT?

YOU AREN'T OVER HER.

I'VE BEEN OVER BUFFY SINCE THE NIGHT WE FIRST BROUGHT DOWN A HOUSE.

I'M A COP. I READ PEOPLE. AND THE ONLY REASON YOU WON'T TELL HER HOW YOU FEEL IS BECAUSE YOU'RE AFRAID YOU MIGHT HURT HER.

BUT, LIKE YOU SAID, BUFFY'S A BIG GIRL.

SHE CAN HANDLE WHATEVER YOU THROW AT HER.

EVERYTHING OKAY?

HOW WAS THE RIDE ALONG?

DOWLING'S A GOOD BLOKE.

IF A BIT NOSY.

BUFF...

THERE'S SOMETHING I NEED TO TELL YOU.

CAN I GO FIRST? I NEED TO SAY IT BEFORE THE WORDS DISAPPEAR.

I WANT TO DO SOMETHING. AND I THINK IT'S GOING TO BE HARD.

SO I WAS HOPING YOU COULD HELP ME.

ANYTHING FOR YOU, LUV.

SPIKE--

I'M GOING TO HAVE AN ABORTION.

YOU'RE PREGNANT?

ROBIN TOLD ME HOW NIKKI TRIED TO RUN AWAY FROM SLAYING AFTER HE WAS BORN. AND I THOUGHT I COULD DO WHAT SHE COULDN'T.

I THOUGHT I HAD EVERYTHING THAT NIKKI DIDN'T.

DAWN, XANDER, WILLOW...

YOU...

I WAS READY TO ASK YOU TO RUN AWAY WITH ME.

BUT THEN I REALIZED...

I'M BARELY ABLE TO HOLD ONTO A JOB. I LIVE WITH ROOMMATES WHO ARE ABOUT TO KICK ME OUT. AND I CAN'T EVEN HOLD MY ALCOHOL WELL ENOUGH TO REMEMBER WHO GOT ME PREGNANT.

I CAN HANDLE THE SLAYER STUFF. I *CAN* DO WHAT NIKKI COULDN'T.

BUT EVERYTHING ELSE? I'M NOT READY. AT LEAST NOT NOW.

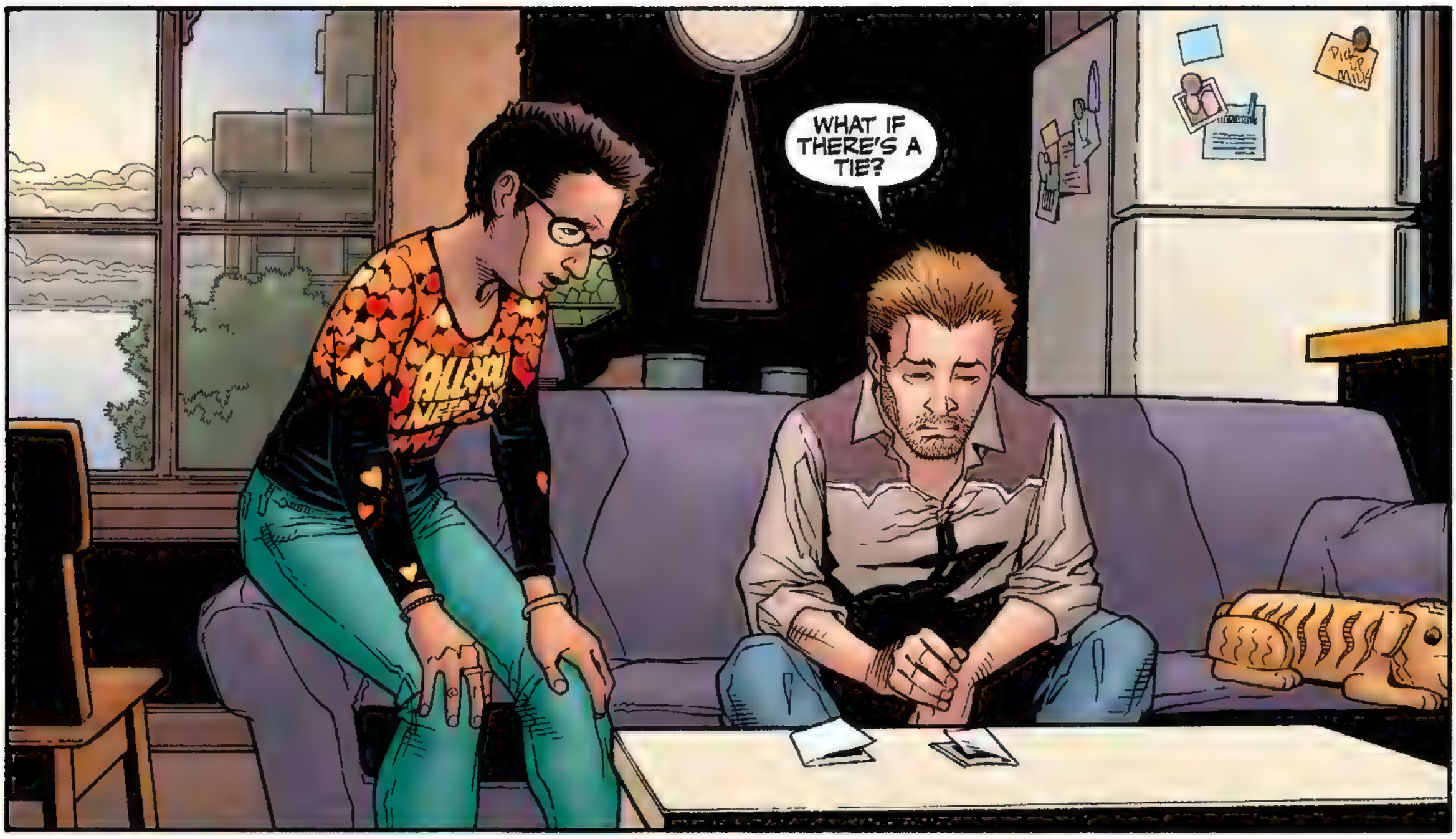
IT'S NOT THE SLAYING.

IT'S *ME.*

WILL YOU COME WITH ME WHEN I DO THIS?

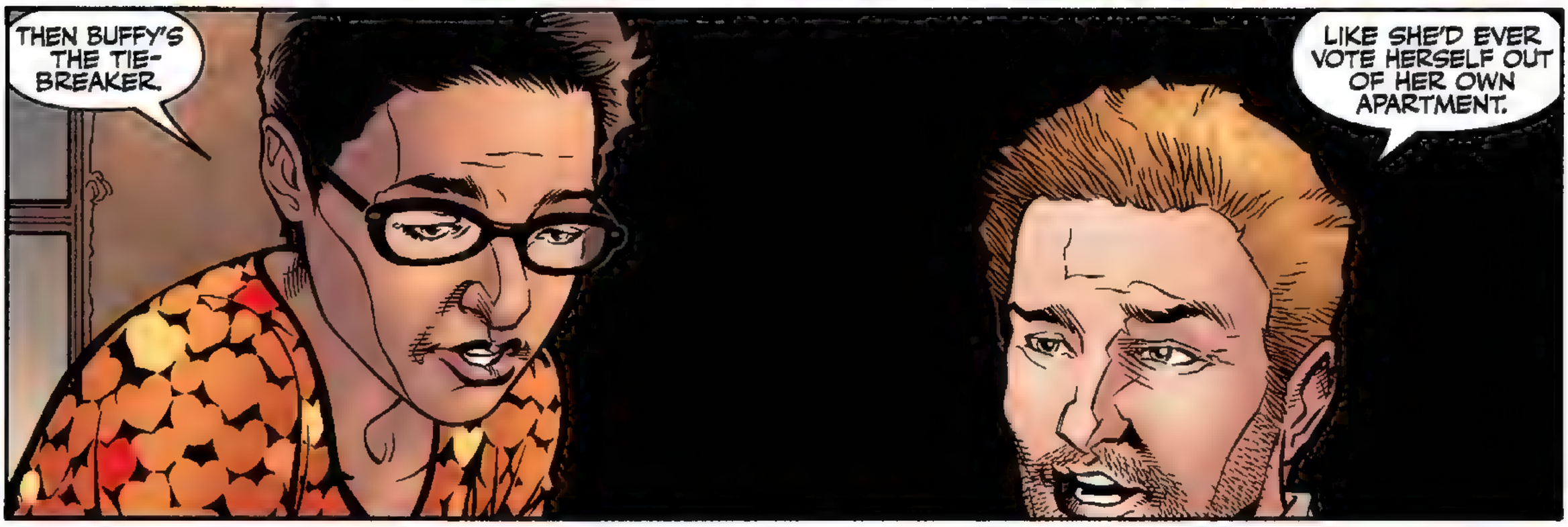
YEAH.

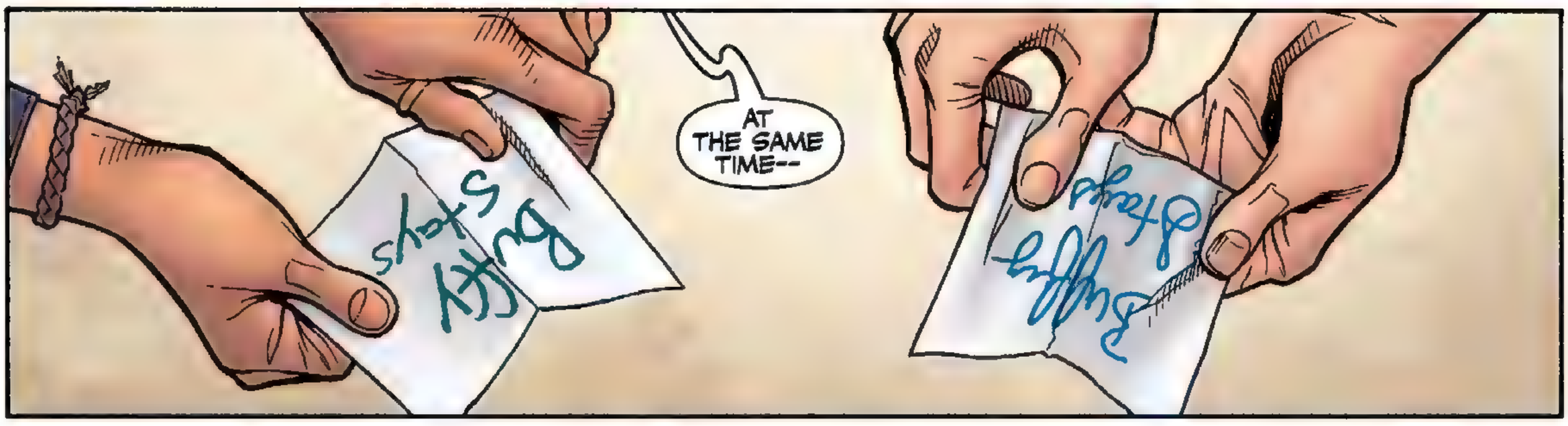
noto



ON YOUR OWN

PART TWO





BUFFY STAYS!

BUFFY STAYS!

I THOUGHT *YOU* WANTED HER OUT.

I THOUGHT *YOU* WANTED HER OUT.

I OVERREACTED.

WITH ALL THE ZOMPIRE ATTACKS ON THE NEWS LATELY, I FEEL SAFER LIVING *WITH* A SLAYER.

AND SHE CAN'T BRING HER WORK HOME WITH HER UNLESS SHE INVITES IT INSIDE.

WHY DID YOU CHANGE YOUR MIND?

SHE'S CUTE.

AND SHE HAS A CROSSBOW, WHICH I'M HOPING SHE'LL TEACH ME TO USE IN EXCHANGE FOR MY VOTE OF ROOMMATE CLEMENCY.

PLUS, I THINK SHE'S COOL.

ME TOO.

BUFFY, WE TOOK A VOTE AND--

--WE WANT YOU TO STAY.

YOU OKAY, LUV?

I PUT YOUR SUITCASE IN THE CABIN. THE BUGS CAN GET THE REST OF YOUR BOXES WHENEVER YOU WANT.

PREFERABLY WHEN THE ROOMIES AREN'T HOME. TUMBLE FREAKS OUT AT BUG-SIZED BUGS.

YOU REALLY WANT TO DO THIS?

TUMBLE AND ANAHEED LOOK AT ME LIKE...

...WELL, THE WAY PEOPLE LOOK AT BUMPY-FACED YOU.

JUST ONE MORE REMINDER OF HOW I FAIL AT ALL THINGS ORDINARY.

LIVING IN A GIANT COCKROACH ISN'T GOING TO HELP YOU THERE.

BESIDES, THAT'S NOT WHAT I WAS ASKING.

OH. RIGHT.

DID YOU CALL THE DOCTOR?

YEP. TOMORROW.

I CAN CHANGE THE APPOINTMENT IF YOU WANT.

NO, I NEED TO DO THIS.

IT'LL BE ONE THING I DON'T MESS UP.

--FOUR-ONE-FIVE REPORTED IN PIONEER PARK. ALL AVAILABLE UNITS RESPOND--

--REPEAT. FOUR-ONE-FIVE. POSSIBLE VAMPIRE INVOLVEMENT--

WE'RE FIVE AWAY.

YOU LEARN ANYTHING USEFUL ON YOUR PEROXIDE PLAY DATE WITH THAT VAMPIRE LAST NIGHT?

ENOUGH.

LET'S MOVE.

"IS THIS ALL THE CLOSET SPACE YOU HAVE?"

FITS ALL MY CLOTHES.

YOU HAVE LIKE ONE JACKET.

WHAT MAKES YOU THINK I DON'T HAVE DOUBLES?

DID YOU REALLY MEAN WHAT YOU SAID THE OTHER NIGHT?

IF YOU WERE GOING TO GO THROUGH WITH HAVING A LITTLE SLAYER...

...WAS I REALLY FIRST ON DECK TO RUN AWAY WITH?

WE WOULD HAVE JUST ENDED UP IN SOME APARTMENT JUST LIKE THIS. CRAMPED. DINGY. SLIGHTLY LESS STEAMPUNK.

AND DEFINITELY SANS THE MOLTING LEGS.

SORRY.

TOLD SEBASTIAN TO BE CAREFUL WHEN HE'S TIDYING UP.

IF I WAS GOING TO FLOUT EVERY SLAYER INSTINCT IN MY BODY, WHO BETTER TO DO IT WITH THAN YOU?

BUT IT NEVER WOULD HAVE WORKED.

WHY NOT? YOU EVER SEE ME WITH THE KIDLETS? DIDN'T DO SUCH A BAD JOB WITH DAWN WHEN YOU WERE TWO METERS DOWN.

BUT, SPIKE, IF I WERE TRYING TO HAVE A NORMAL LIFE...

...YOU'D BE EXACTLY WHAT I'D BE RUNNING AWAY FROM.

RIGHT. I'M JUST THE BLOKE YOU GO TO WHEN YOU NEED HELP OUT OF A JAM.

SPIKE--

WHOOSH

YOUR MAJESTY, I THINK I LOST A LIMB IN MISTRESS BUFFY'S ROOM.

WANT TO LOSE ANOTHER?

BLOODY HELL.

BZZ BZZ

I DON'T HAVE TIME FOR THE KEYSTONE KOPS.

YOU TOLD ME I WASN'T READY FOR A NEST...

WHERE ARE YOU AND HOW SOON DO I NEED TO BE THERE?

...NOW I UNDERSTAND WHY.

WE WAIT FOR BACKUP.

THIS WAS OUR BACKUP.

BUT WAIT--

WHERE ARE THE MEN...

AHH!

SET COURSE FOR THAT BLOODY PARK WITH THE FIRE NOZZLE STICKING OUT OF IT.

WHY DO ALIEN BUGS USE EUROPEAN SOCKETS?

REAL QUESTION'S WHY EUROPEANS USE ALIEN SOCKETS.

BUT NO TIME FOR THAT. GOT TO RESCUE OUR DETECTIVE PAL FROM A NASTY ZOMP NEST.

I'M COMING.

NOT LIKE THAT YOU AREN'T.

SPIKE, WHY DOES IT MATTER? I'M NOT GOING THROUGH WITH IT.

UNTIL YOU DON'T GO THROUGH WITH IT, YOU'RE PERSONA NON SLAYER.

UNDERSTAND?

GRRR! GRR!

GRRRRRR

GRRRRRRRRRRRRRR

SLAM

KLIK

HEY, NEANDER-VAMPS--

--OOF--

TWO CAN PLAY AT THAT GAME--

...GRRR!

PAFT

GRRRRRRRRR

POINTY END OUT.

AIM FOR THE HEART.

HOW CLOSE CAN YOU GET THIS FLY TRAP TO THAT TOWER?

I'M ALREADY BLOODY DEAD!

AHHHH--!

GRRR!

GRRRRR...

A LITTLE HELP HERE, DETECTIVE.

PAFT

THUD

THAT WAS MY FIRST SLAY.

WON'T BE YOUR LAST.

YOU LIVE ON THAT THING, TOO?

IT'S A NEW ARRANGEMENT.

PAFT

WHEN DID YOU AND YOUR VAMPIRE BOYFRIEND DECIDE TO PLAY SPACESHIP?

PAFT

SPIKE'S NOT MY BOYFRIEND.

DID HE SAY THAT?

PAFT

DIDN'T HAVE TO. IT WAS WRITTEN ALL OVER HIS FACE.

THAT VAMPIRE'S IN LOVE WITH YOU.

GET ON THAT SPACESHIP AND DON'T TOUCH ANYTHING.

NOT THAT YOU'D WANT TO.

"IT'S CRAWLING WITH BUGS."

PAFT PAFT

PAFT

PAFT

THANKS, LUV.

YOU OKAY?

IS IT TRUE, SPIKE?

ARE YOU STILL IN LOVE WITH ME?

YOU REALLY GOING TO MAKE ME SAY WHAT EVERYONE ELSE ALREADY WORKED OUT?

YOU KNOW I'M TERRIBLE AT EVERYTHING THAT DOESN'T END WITH SLAYING. I'M NOT WELL ROUNDED. I HAVE LOTS OF CORNERS.

AND MOST OF THEM ARE POINTY.

WHY DIDN'T YOU TELL ME?

'CAUSE YOU HAD BIGGER PROBLEMS AND YOU NEEDED MY HELP.

BUT I GET HOW THINGS WORK WITH US. I WAS A TWIT TO THINK THEY MIGHT HAVE CHANGED.

SO ONCE I KNOW YOU'RE OKAY, I'M GETTING IN MY SPACESHIP AND FLYING INTO THE WILD BLACK YONDER.

THAT'S NOT WHY I FOUGHT TO GET MY SOUL BACK. THAT'S NOT WHY I'VE BEEN STICKING UP FOR YOU ABOUT THE SEED. AND THAT'S CERTAINLY NOT WHY I'VE STUCK AROUND THIS BLOODY CITY.

'CAUSE I DON'T WANT TO BE THE DARK PLACE YOU RUN TO WHEN THINGS AREN'T WORKING.

YOU STAYED HERE FOR ME?

I DIDN'T STAY FOR CABLE CARS AND RICE-A-RONI.

I CAN GIVE YOU WHAT YOU NEED.

I WANT NORMAL, TOO.

AND I WANT IT WITH YOU.

GRRRRRRR...

AWAKE

PAFT

IS THAT MY ARM?

YOUR ARM IS THE LEAST OF OUR WORRIES.

HOW 'BOUT MY SHOULDER! SHOULD I WORRY ABOUT MY SHOULDER?!

HATE TO BE HOPELESSLY OPAQUE, SLAYER, BUT...

I THINK YOU'VE GONE MECHANICAL.

WAIT...WAIT...SO ON YOUR HOME PLANET, YOU STEP ON BUG-SIZED HUMANS?

NO, HE'S JUST MESSING WITH YOU.

MASTER SPIKE IS REQUESTING A PICKUP.

I DON'T UNDERSTAND. I'M *ME*. I'M BUFFY. I'M NOT A ROBOT.

WOULD YOU LIKE TO PUT YOUR ARM IN THE LIMB INCINERATOR?

NOT NOW, SEB.

DON'T WORRY. THEY ALWAYS GROW BACK.

TRUST ME, LUV. I KNOW MY WAY AROUND A BUFFYBOT.

AND YOU ARE DEFINITELY ONE.

I THINK THIS MEANS I'M *NOT* PREGNANT.

SPIKE...

I'M A F$%@ING ROBOT!

A (OF ME) PART ONE

FINALLY!

I KNEW THIS WOULD HAPPEN! SORRY I'M NOT ALREADY PACKED-- LAUNDRY DAY CAME AND WENT AND I HAD TO DIG INTO MY ALIEN ABDUCTION KIT--

ANDREW.

NEED A CHAT, MATE.
OH. HEY SPIKE. HEY BUFFY.
IT'S JUST A CLOSE ENCOUNTER OF THE SLAYER KIND...OH WELL.
WHAT DID YOU *DO*, ANDREW?
HEYYYY BUFFY, WHAT HAPPENED TO THE ARM WAIT I KNOW WHY YOU'RE HERE LISTEN--
WHAT DID YOU DO WITH MY BODY?!
OW! OW! OW!
I HAVEN'T HIT YOU YET!

IT'S HER.

DETECTIVE DOWLING CONFIRMS THAT THESE ARE THE REMAINS OF DETECTIVE MIRANDA CHEUNG.

INJURIES APPEAR CONSISTENT WITH RECENT VAMPIRE, OR "ZOMPIRE," ATTACKS--MULTIPLE LACERATIONS AND PUNCTURE WOUNDS, MOST NOTABLY ON THE ANTERIOR PORTION OF THE RIGHT DISTAL RADIUS AND THE LEFT LATERAL OF THE ESOPHAGUS, CLOSE TO THE CAROTID ARTERY AND JUGULAR VEIN.

BLOOD WAS PULLED FROM BOTH WOUNDS. INTERNAL BLEEDING FILLED THE ABDOMINAL CAVITY AND LUNGS WITH BLOOD. THERE IS ALSO SEVERE TRAUMA TO THE CEE-FOUR AND CEE-FIVE VERTEBRAE.

AN AUTOPSY SHOULD DETERMINE IF EXSANGUINATION OR NECK TRAUMA ULTIMATELY TOOK HER LIFE.

MAYBE SOMETHING IN THE PH BALANCE OF THE TRUEBLOOD...WHAT MADE YOU TAKE THE TEST?

I WAS *LATE*--

OH, WELL, WE'RE DEFINITELY ON BUFFYBOT O.S. 10 HERE, BUT YOU'LL JUST HAVE TO FORGIVE ME FOR NOT PROGRAMMING *THAT* IN.

AND I'VE BEEN BARFY...

HUH. THOUGHT I'D FIGURED OUT HOW TO MAKE THE BOT PROCESS FOOD.

WELL, I DON'T THINK I CAN DO ANYTHING ABOUT THAT, BUT I CAN HELP WITH THE ARM.

VOILÀ!

IF YOU DON'T MIND HAVING TWO LEFT ARMS...

NO, ANDREW.

HOW ABOUT YOU JUST EXPLAIN *WHY THE HELL I'M A ROBOT!*

WHOA, WHOA, SPIKE ASKED ME TO HELP--!

I BLOODY WELL *DIDN'T!* NO INTEREST IN GOING DOWN THE TIN-SLAYER ROAD AGAIN!

EW, NOT THAT! SPIKE ASKED ME TO TRACK DOWN WHATEVER WAS COMING *AFTER* YOU!

I *TRIED,* I REALLY DID. BUT I DON'T HAVE A LOT OF EXPERIENCE JAMES BONDING LIKE THAT.

"BUT I *DID* HAVE SOMETHING UP MY SLEEVE TO KEEP YOU SAFE!"

UGH. TUMBLE'S SANGRIA TASTES LIKE CHALKBOARD.

I THINK HE PUT KIWI IN IT. IT REACTS TO THE ALCOHOL. IN SPAIN I LEARNED THAT.

"YOU GOT ME DRUNK?"

"ACTUALLY...I ROOFIED YOU."

THAT'S HOW YOU WOUND UP IN THE BEDROOM WITH SPIKE.

EVERYWHERE I STEP, *SPLOOSH*, ***SPLOOSH, SPLOOSH!***

'S WHAT YOU GET FOR PLAYING HORSEY IN THE POOL WITH YOUR FLATMATE AND ANDREW.

HE GAVE ME A DRINK!

DON'T THINK HE WAS THE ONLY ONE, LOVE.

"LOVE"...?

FIGURE OF SPEECH.

FIGURE OUT *THIS*...

WHY ISN'T THE BUTTONS IN THE FRONNNNT...

WHUMP

YOU'RE A GOD-AWFUL MESS, SLAYER, IN MORE WAYS THAN ONE--BUT MAY YOU FEEL NO PAIN TILL MORN.

WHAT YOU GET *THEN*--

"--YOU'VE NO ONE TO BLAME BUT YOURSELF."

SURE, WHEN YOU SAY IT LIKE THAT IT SOUNDS DOWNRIGHT CRUEL!

SPIKE, SHUT UP.

SO, WHAT, ANDREW, YOU WERE WATCHING FROM THE CLOSET WHEN I PASSED OUT?

WELL, FROM ACROSS THE HALL. BUT *YOU* DIDN'T PASS OUT.

"*YOU*--ROBOT BUFFY--WERE WITH *ME*."

WHOA--MIXED COMPANY?!

I SHOULD UNDRESS IF I AM TO REPLACE THE NAKED GIRL. YOUR TREMBLING IS ILLOGICAL. WHEN YOU BUILT ME, I DID NOT HAVE CLOTHES ON.

NN, YEAH, GOOD THINKING...MAYBE YOU CAN DRESS HER, TOO--

OH BOY, NO NO NO, I JUST TOOK A LEFT TURN INTO SPIKE'S FANTASYLAND.

WHEN THE TRANSFER'S COMPLETE, HER BODY WILL BE PERFECTLY ABLE TO DRESS ITSELF--

--AND *YOU*, MY LITTLE POD PERSON, WILL SLEEP THE SLEEP OF THE DRUNK, FOR A *LITTLE* WHILE ...

UNTIL YOU WAKE UP, WITH BUFFY'S BRAIN IN THAT NOGGIN OF YOURS, SERVING COFFEE UNTIL THE ASSASSIN STRIKES...

UM. NOT THAT *YOU'RE* EXPENDABLE--

BUT I'M NOT REAL... I'M *NOT* THE SLAYER...

I'M NOT BUFFY.

WELL, YOU *ARE.* BUFFY'S *MIND* IS IN YOU.

ARE YOU LESS REAL THAN YOUR MEMORIES? WAS ARNOLD NOT REAL IN "*TOTAL RECALL,*" OR DECKER IN "*BLADE RUNNER*"--ASSUMING, OF COURSE, HE WAS A REPLICANT, WHICH I THINK WE--

OH GOD...

I FOUND A LOT OF STUFF WHEN I WAS POKING AROUND WARREN'S LAB.* A LOT. HE MUST'VE BEEN PLANNING ON GETTING OUT OF THAT *RED SKULL* SITUATION--

HE'D WORKED OUT THE WHOLE MIND SWAP. I JUST STOLE THE TECH.

'COURSE, THERE WAS A CHANCE THE MIND TRANSFER WOULD LEAVE YOU PERMANENTLY *DRUNK,* SO ACTUALLY THIS PREGNANCY SCARE'S NOT SO--

YOU HAVE *ANY* IDEA WHAT YOU *PUT* HER THROUGH?!

I WAS TRYING TO *PROTECT* HER! YOU KEPT TALKING ABOUT SOME NEW *BIG BAD* WAITING AROUND THE CORNER!

I WANTED TO *HELP!* I WANTED TO KEEP YOUR BODY SAFE!

IF YOU THOUGHT YOU WERE HELPING YOU'D HAVE *TOLD* ME WHAT YOU WERE DOING.

*SEASON 8!

=SIGH=

YOU DON'T KNOW THE FIRST THING ABOUT WITNESS PROTECTION. WHAT GOOD IS IT IF ANYONE KNOWS? *EVEN* YOU TWO.

BUT, BUFFY, IT *IS* YOUR MIND IN THAT HIGH-TECH FRAME.

WARREN AND JONATHAN AND I, WE DID SO MUCH BAD STUFF--NOW I'M USING THOSE POWERS FOR GOOD!

IT'S HOW I EARNED MY WAY INTO THE SCOOBY GANG--

NO, ANDREW, THIS IS HOW YOU *SCREW IT UP!*

THE WHYS AND WHEREFORES ARE IN THE PAST, MATE. THAT PONCE *SIPHON* IS APPROPRIATELY FULL OF *HOLES.*

THE DANGER'S PASSED, THE *BIG BAD'S* LOCKED UP IN HOSPITAL, SO ENOUGH OF THIS.

ONE LAST TIME, ANDREW--

"--WHERE THE HELL IS MY BODY?"

SNAP

OH!

OOPS.

HEY BUFFY.

SPIKE. I DON'T NEED YOU COMING IN HERE WALKING ON EGGSHELLS. DO ME A FAVOR.

SAY SOMETHING STUPID. OR NEEDY. OR CREEPY.

ANYTHING TO MAKE ME FORGET...

...THAT NONE OF WHAT I WENT THROUGH WAS REAL.

WELL, IT'S NOT OVER YET, SLAYER, NOT UNTIL THE LITTLE MAN--

I THOUGHT FOR ONCE I *WAS* FACING SOMETHING NORMAL--SOMETHING A *PERSON* DEALS WITH.

AND I WAS HANDLING IT LIKE AN ADULT, SPIKE. RIGHT? I WAS REALISTIC, RESPONSIBLE. MAKING THE HARD CHOICES.

BUT TURNS OUT IT'S JUST MORE BIZARRE SLAYER CRAP--

I'M A ROBOT WITH ONE ARM. A WALKING, TALKING SLOT MACHINE.

BUT FAKE AS MY PROBLEMS WERE, YOU KNOW WHAT WAS REAL?

YOU SHOWING UP WHEN I NEEDED SOMEONE.

THANKS.

"I AM SORRY, BUT WE DO NOT HAVE SOMETHING THAT WOULD RENDER US INVISIBLE AS YOU SUGGEST. PERHAPS YOU--"

LOOK, I DON'T KNOW WHAT SPIKE TOLD YOU, BUT I'M NOT TRYING TO STEAL TECH SECRETS. STEAMPUNK ISN'T EVEN MY THING.

NOW, OBVIOUSLY SPIKE DOESN'T WANT ANYONE FOLLOWING US TO BUFFY'S BODY. SO WILL YOU JUST TURN ON THE CLOAKING DEVICE?

I DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU ARE TALKING ABOUT.

HOW DOES IT WORK? IS IT POWERED BY EEZO? OR STYGIUM? OR ARE WE *NOT* CLOAKING, BUT INSTEAD GOING FASTER THAN LIGHT?

NO, WE'D ALREADY--

BAM

IF I WASN'T POSSESSED OF SUCH A *RATIONAL* NATURE--

--I *COULD* SUCCUMB TO A FIT OF *RAGE*. PITCH YOU OFF THIS ANT TRAP, FOR THE *BABY SCARE* IF NOTHING ELSE.

ANY IDEA WHAT THAT WAS *LIKE* FOR HER?

IF YOU *DON'T* FIX THIS, YOU AND I WILL HAVE PROBLEMS--WITH *ONE* DECISIVE SOLUTION.

DAWN, COULD YOU GET MY EYE PATCH?

THINK I LEFT IT ON THE NIGHTSTAND...

DAWN?

DAWN!

BAM

COMING! WOW, RELAX!

SORRY. I JUST DIDN'T KNOW WHERE YOU--

DING DONG

DING DONG

UM...HI. WE WERE ONLY SUPPOSED TO CALL IF WE HEARD FROM BUFFY, RIGHT?

NOTHING TO REPORT, ALTHOUGH WOW, DO YOU SMELL GASOLINE?

DON' SMELL ANYTHING. AND I SAW YOUR SISTER, SO DON' SWEAT IT.

SHE SHOWED WHEN MY PARTNER AND I HIT A ZOMBIE... A ZOMPIRE, UM, SWARM. CAN I TALK TO YOU AND, Y'KNOW, THE GUY WITH THE PATCH. BOYFRIEND, RIGHT?

JESUS. DEAD OFFICERS EVERYWHERE...

IS BUFFY OKAY?

SURE, ASIDE FROM BEING A ROBOT, SHE'S FINE.

BUFFY'S WHAT?

I KNOW, IT'S RIDICULOUS, RIGHT? HOW DO YOU *DEAL* WITH THIS?

I MEAN, I SEE SOME NASTY $#%€. ALL THE TIME. COPS LOSE PARTNERS.

BUT THE *WAY* THEY GOT HER... MIRANDA...

THE WAY SHE LOOKED... THEY DRAINED HER BLOOD...

THEY *DRAINED* HER? THEY DIDN'T JUST KILL HER?

"JUST"? SEE? YOU'RE LIKE A LITTLE GIRL, BUT YOU SAY SOMETHING LIKE THAT...

UGH. I'M IN *COLLEGE.*

I MEAN, WHAT THEY *DID* TO HER. NO BLOOD IN HER VEINS, BUT... BLOOD ALL OVER HER FACE...

NO.

...AND HER STOMACH...

"... LIKE SHE WAS A BLOOD BAG...

"...AND THEY EMPTIED HER...

"...AND JUST FILLED HER BACK UP..."

GRRR

GRRRAAAR

AIIIE!

GRRR

"STARDATE 11204.11. WE ARE ON COURSE TO THE S-67 SECTOR OF DELTA LAMBDA PHI, OTHERWISE KNOWN AS MILL VALLEY, CALIFORNIA..."

ON A MISSION TO RECOVER A DECORATED FEDERATION CAPTAIN FROM A *VERY* WELL-INTENTIONED BUT PERHAPS FLAWED PLAN...

...FINANCED, I MIGHT ADD, THROUGH A LOT OF HARD WORK AND RECENTLY ACQUIRED PATENTS THAT WARREN TOTES COULD'VE FILED HIMSELF BUT CLEARLY HAS NO USE FOR NOW.

MY FERENGI CREW GROWS NERVOUS--BUT LIKE MYSELF, THEY KNOW THAT IF WE SUCCEED--

"FERENGI"?

HE JUST KEEPS *TALKING*...

--WE WILL BE THE MOST--*AHA!* HERE YOU ARE.

I TOOK THE LIBERTY OF CONNECTING YOUR SENSORS TO CAMERAS IN THE SAFE HOUSE WHERE "MIRROR, MIRROR" BUFFY NOW RESIDES.

ENSIGN, RAISE THE SIGNAL.

MY KITCHEN IS AWESOME.

I KNOW, RIGHT? AND CHECK OUT THE ENTERTAINMENT CENTER.

THIS WHAT YOU HAD IN MIND IF WE WERE GONNA RUN AWAY, SLAYER?

IT WASN'T...

BEEP! BEEP! BEEP!

BEEP! BEEP! BEEP!

WHAT'S HAPPENING?

A BREAK-IN? I DON'T KNOW. SILENT ALARMS--SHE DOESN'T HEAR THEM. HOW DO WE TOGGLE THROUGH THE VIEWS FASTER?

SOD THE VIEWS--

--FULL SPEED AHEAD-- SUBURBIA!

HOW THE MIGHTY HAVE FALLEN.

KSSSSH

BUT IT'S YOUR LUCKY DAY.

I'M GONNA LIBERATE YOU FROM THIS BETTY CROCKER BULL$%$@.

WHUMP

REA666

noto

QUITE THE BUFFY DREAM HOUSE YOU WHIPPED UP HERE, YOU WEE NOB.

EVERYTHING BUT THE PINK CONVERTIBLE.

A PRIUS WAS MORE IN LINE WITH THE IMAGE I WAS GOING FOR.

A SPACIOUS, TWO-BEDROOM STARTER HOME. ALL THE FURNISHINGS CAREFULLY CHOSEN FROM THE GIRL-ON-A-BUDGET'S FRIEND, *IKEA*-- MIXED IN WITH KICKY LITTLE VINTAGE-STORE FINDS, OF COURSE.

ADDS PERSONALITY TO THE ILLUSION!

APART (OF ME)

NOTE HOW THE WINDOW TREATMENTS IN THE KITCHEN--

WHOA!

IT'S NOT BLOOD. CALIFORNIA MERLOT. HOW CLICHÉ.

SORT OF THE POINT.

SHE FOUGHT BACK. SHE TRIED, AT LEAST.

WOULD SHE EVEN *KNOW* HOW TO FIGHT? ANDREW?

WELL, IT'S SORT OF NECESSARY TO THE PLAN THAT *SHE* NOT KNOW SHE'S THE SLAYER. BUT THERE *IS* MUSCLE MEMORY, SO--

WOULD YOU QUIT REFERRING TO A *PLAN?* YOUR PLAN WAS A CONVOLUTED DISASTER-- SOMEONE *GOT* TO HER.

BUFFY?

'S RIGHT, *BUFFY.* WHO DO YOU THINK I'M--

OH.

HOW THE HELL COULD ANDREW DO THIS?

I KNOW, SLAYER, I'LL SNAP HIS SCRAWNY LITTLE NECK IF YOU--

SPIKE, PLEASE. I MEAN HOW *DID* HE DO THIS?

HE GAVE ME THE KIND OF LIFE I COULDN'T CREATE FOR MYSELF.

SHE'S USING THIS AS AN OFFICE. BUT LOOK. CLOSET. WE'RE BETWEEN THE BEDROOM AND THE BATHROOM. DID SHE PLAN ON MAKING THIS A NURSERY SOMEDAY...?

BUFFY, THIS ISN'T ANYONE'S REAL LIFE.

I DON'T THINK SHE KNOWS THAT...

GOT HER!

I PUT A TRACKING DEVICE IN HER JEWELRY, JUST TO BE SAFE--

"--AND I JUST GOT THE SIGNAL."

AH!

RIPP

I ALWAYS KNEW YOU WERE A JOKE.

BUT I NEVER EXPECTED YOU TO SO COMPLETELY GIVE UP. DID SEVERIN TAKE THE LAST LITTLE BIT OF SLAYER OUT OF YOU? IS THAT WHY YOU'RE PLAYING HOUSE IN THE SUBURBS WHILE ANOTHER DECOY FIGHTS YOUR--

"SLAYER"?! WHAT? WHO *ARE* YOU?! LOOK, IF YOU WANT MONEY--

WHACK

DON'T INSULT ME, SUMMERS.

I THOUGHT YOU WERE GUTLESS *BEFORE*-- BEFORE I FIGURED YOU OUT. BEFORE I SAW *THIS*. WHAT KIND OF WOMAN LEADS AN ARMY TO BATTLE JUST SO SHE CAN SEE 'EM DIE?

YOU WERE THE *CHOSEN ONE*. YOU THOUGHT YOU WERE BETTER THAN ALL OF US--THE GREATEST *SLAYER* OF ALL TIME--THEN YOU GAVE IT ALL UP TO BE A *YUPPIE HAUSFRAU*. DISGUSTING.

OKAY, OKAY, I'M *SORRY*! YOU'RE RIGHT! I'M *TERRIBLE* AT SLAYING! *YOU'RE* THE BEST SLAYER!

BUT JUST LET ME *GO*, PLEASE?!

WHO ARE YOU...?

OKAY--

--NO LIGHTS INSIDE.

DID SHE TAKE OUT THE WHOLE BUILDING?

SHE WAS A MARINE. BEFORE SHE WAS A COP.

IF...IF ZOMPIRES ARE *TURNING* PEOPLE NOW, DO YOU THINK THEY'RE TARGETING COPS...?

ZOMPIRES CAN'T PUT SENTENCES TOGETHER--MUCH LESS MASTER PLANS. YOUR PARTNER WAS JUST UNLUCKY. AND UNPREPARED.

UNPREPARED? SHE WAS A *COP!* NOW I'M GOING IN THERE TO FIND OUT WHAT'S--

ELVIS *LEFT* THE BUILDING, DETECTIVE!

BUT WE *JUST* MISSED HER. DAWN, GO BACK TO THE TRUCK--

PLEASE. I'VE BEEN FIGHTING THESE THINGS SINCE MIDDLE SCHOOL.

JESUS, DAWN--JUST LISTEN TO ME.

UNH!

WHOA!

GET OUT OF HERE... *PLEASE...*

DON'T TRY TO GET UP. WHO DID--

HER FACE... MY GOD! SHE GRABBED ME... SHE...

THE OFFICERS-- THEY TRIED TO STOP HER--

SHE DRAGGED ONE OF 'EM DOWN *THERE...*

AMBULANCE IS ON THE WAY.

CAN YOU WAIT WITH HER?

LEAVE THE DRUNK COP WITH HER--I'M WAY MORE USEFUL TO YOU GOING AFTER HIS PARTNER.

I'M SORRY I BARKED AT YOU. BUT THERE'S NO WAY HE'LL STAY BEHIND WHILE WE GO STAKE HIS PARTNER.

I KNOW YOU CAN DO THIS, BUT SOMEONE HAS TO SIT WITH HER.

WE HAVE TO DO THIS, RIGHT...?

YUP.

I'VE KILLED A COUPLE. I KILLED ONE LAST NIGHT. A ZOMPIRE. GOD, SPIKE MADE IT SEEM LIKE A GAME...BUT... SHE'S MY PARTNER...

YEAH, IT SUCKS. FIRST TIME I HAD TO KILL ONE OF MY FRIENDS I WAS SIXTEEN YEARS OLD. AND WHEN I THINK ABOUT THAT NIGHT, I DON'T SEE THE FACE OF A VAMPIRE. I JUST SEE JESSE'S FACE. BUT BELIEVE ME--

--YOU DON'T WANT HER HURTING ANY MORE PEOPLE.

BZZT BZZT

BUFFY CALLING

HEY, DAWNIE, JUST ME.

SORRY I MISSED YOU, BUT I'VE, AH, HAD NO RECEPTION...TRY ME AGAIN...?

THE LITTLE BIT KNOW SHE'S NOT GONNA BE AN AUNTIE?

YET, I MEAN.

NOPE. I CAN'T LEAVE THAT ON VOICEMAIL, RIGHT?

EVEN UNDER NORMAL CIRCUMSTANCES I COULDN'T LEAVE THAT ON VOICEMAIL.

PARDON THE INTERRUPTION. MASTER ANDREW WANTED ME TO TELL YOU THAT HE BELIEVES--

OH, HE'S GIVING MY BUGS ORDERS, NOW?

SPIKE, I MIGHT STILL NEED HIS HELP.

IT'S A WEAK SIGNAL, BUT I'VE TRACKED THE NECKLACE. IT LOOKS LIKE SHE'S ACTUALLY BACK IN THE GAY BAY ITSELF.

WE'LL BE THERE IN TEN.

IT'S RIGHT OFF SAUSALITO--OH, HEH... *ANGEL* ISLAND.

San Francisco Bay

Angel Island

Sausalito

San Francisco

RIGHT. NOW, ANY OF THIS TELL YOU WHO TOOK HER?

WHAT?

NOTHING-- WHAT?

OH, THAT'S PATHETIC, SLAYER, IT'S LIKE THE AWKWARD BEATS JUST CAN'T COME FAST ENOUGH FOR YOU.

I THOUGHT IT WAS KINDA AWKWARD.

?

YOU KNOW, I AM REALLY SORRY. I--I'M JUST SUCH AN IDIOT.

IT WAS A BAD PLAN. I SHOULD HAVE ASKED YOU, AND OF COURSE YOU'D HAVE SAID NO, AND YOU...

YOU WOULDN'T HAVE HAD TO GO THROUGH ANY OF THIS...

YEAH, ANDREW. I WOULD RATHER NOT HAVE GONE THROUGH ANY OF THIS.

BUFFY!

AND YOU KNOW I'M NOT TALKING ABOUT THE ARM.

YOU HAVE NO IDEA--YOU CAN'T HAVE ANY IDEA--HOW...HOW... THE WORLD JUST FELL OUT FROM UNDER ME WHEN I SAW THAT TEST.

THEN HAVING TO COME TO SUCH *CRYSTAL-CLEAR CERTAINTY...*

YOU KNOW, I UNDERSTAND YOU.

YOUR "MASTERMIND" THING? YOU'RE STILL TRYING TO IMPRESS ***WARREN,*** EVEN NOW. YOU KNOW HOW ***LAME*** THAT IS?

BUT THAT HOUSE-- WHAT KIND OF GAME WAS THAT? WHY PUT SO MUCH WORK INTO IT, SO MUCH DETAIL--

I THOUGHT I COULD GIVE YOU THE LIFE YOU'D WANT IF YOU HADN'T SPENT THE LAST HOWEVER MANY YEARS SAVING THE WORLD.

THAT WAS KIND OF A MOMENT FOR US, RIGHT?

SO WE'RE GOOD...?

FAT CHANCE.

APPROACHING ANGEL ISLAND. HUMANS AND ANDROIDS PLEASE REPORT TO THE AIRLOCK.

GOTTA HOLD THAT LITTLE AX LIKE YOU MEAN IT, DETECTIVE. GOOD GRIP--BOTH HANDS...

WHOA, WHOA... OKAY.

YOU HANG BACK.

I APPRECIATE YOUR HISTORY WITH THIS STUFF, XANDER--SORRY I SHOWED UP DRUNK AT YOUR PLACE.

VERY UNPROFESSIONAL.

I SEE--READY TO TAKE CHARGE. HANDS ARE A LITTLE FAR APART THOUGH.

JUST KEEP YOUR VOICE DOWN. DON'T WANT TO ALERT THE VAMPIRES.

ZOMPIRE...

I DON'T MISS ANY OF THIS. THE SMELL, THE SHADOWS.

THE WAY IT GETS YOUR HEAD BUZZING--

SSH. I DON'T SMELL ANYTHING.

COCKTAIL

YOU JUST DON'T RECOGNIZE IT YET.

THIS IS DETECTIVE ROBERT DOWLING, CALLING IN A MULTIPLE-- A *MASS* HOMICIDE AT HAUGAN'S ON--

DOWLING!

GRRRR!

CHEUNG!

OOOF!

BAM

GRRRR

GRRRR!

AH!

GRRR!

NO! NO!

WHAP

UHN!

KRAKOOM!

BLAM

WAK

AGGH!

PAFT

WAS I RIGHT, DETECTIVE? AS THE DUST CLEARS...

"...WHICH FACE DO YOU SEE?"

THIS OP WOULD BE MORE COVERT IF WE DIDN'T ARRIVE IN THE S.S. HINDENBUG.

YEAH, AND YOU'D STILL BE TRYING TO FIGURE HOW TO TAKE THE *BART* TO THE EAST BAY. BESIDES, I SEE NO ANTAGONISTS...

WE'RE DEALING WITH KIDNAPPERS-- OF COURSE THEY'RE NOT GOING TO SEND A WELCOME PARTY.

WE DON'T KNOW *WHAT* WE'RE DEALING WITH. TILL WE DO, MAYBE YOU SHOULD HANG BACK, SLAYER.

WE'RE NOT PLAYING THAT GAME ANYMORE, SPIKE. I'M NOT PREGNANT, REMEMBER?

I'M NOT *HUMAN.*

UM, SHOULDN'T WE BE...?

TRACKING DOWN REAL ME SO ROBOT ME CAN KICK SOME ASS AND SEND ME BACK TO THE 'BURBS.

SOONER THE BETTER.

ANDREW?

WHO *ARE* WE LOOKING FOR?

WHO'D YOU LEAVE IN THAT HOUSE? IF MY PERSONALITY'S IN *THIS*, DID YOU JUST... PROGRAM THE GIRL IN THAT HOUSE?

I DID. YEAH.

BUT I KEPT AN EYE ON HER. AND SHE STARTED TAKING ON MORE PERSONALITY.

SOMETIMES SHE'D HAVE PEOPLE OVER, AND SHE'D INTERACT WITH THEM SO NATURALLY...

WHAT'S SHE LIKE?

BUFFY...

NO GOOD STANDING 'ROUND WEEPING. I DIDN'T SEE BOLLOCKS FROM UP THERE, AND I'D LOVE TO FIND SOMETHING BEFORE TOO LONG.

WHO'S WEEPING?

NO ONE.

AND I'M THINKING THIS IS A BUST. WE'LL SEPARATE, COVER AS MUCH GROUND AS WE CAN, GET SPIKE TO HIS BEDBUGS BY SUNRISE.

"ANY SIGN OF TROUBLE, DON'T ENGAGE, JUST RETURN AND REPORT--

"--WE MEET BACK HERE IN FIFTEEN."

DON'T ENGAGE, MY ARSE.

BUGGER ALL.

"FEARLESSLY, THE FEARLESS VAMPIRE HUNTERS COMBED THE AREA ..."

...LOOKING FOR THE TELLTALE CLUES WHICH WOULD LEAD THEM TO THEIR QUARRY. COMBING DENSE FOREST AND MISTY BEACH, WITH FIRM FOOTSTEPS AND NARY A TREMBLE...

"SEPARATE"?

HASN'T SHE EVER *SEEN* A HORROR MOVIE?

IF I FIND THE KIDNAPPERS, THEY'RE NOT GONNA LET ME RUN BACK AND GET MY VAMPIRE AND MY ROBOT--!

OH MY GOD, THIS PLAN'S A DISASTER.

THE NECKLACE.

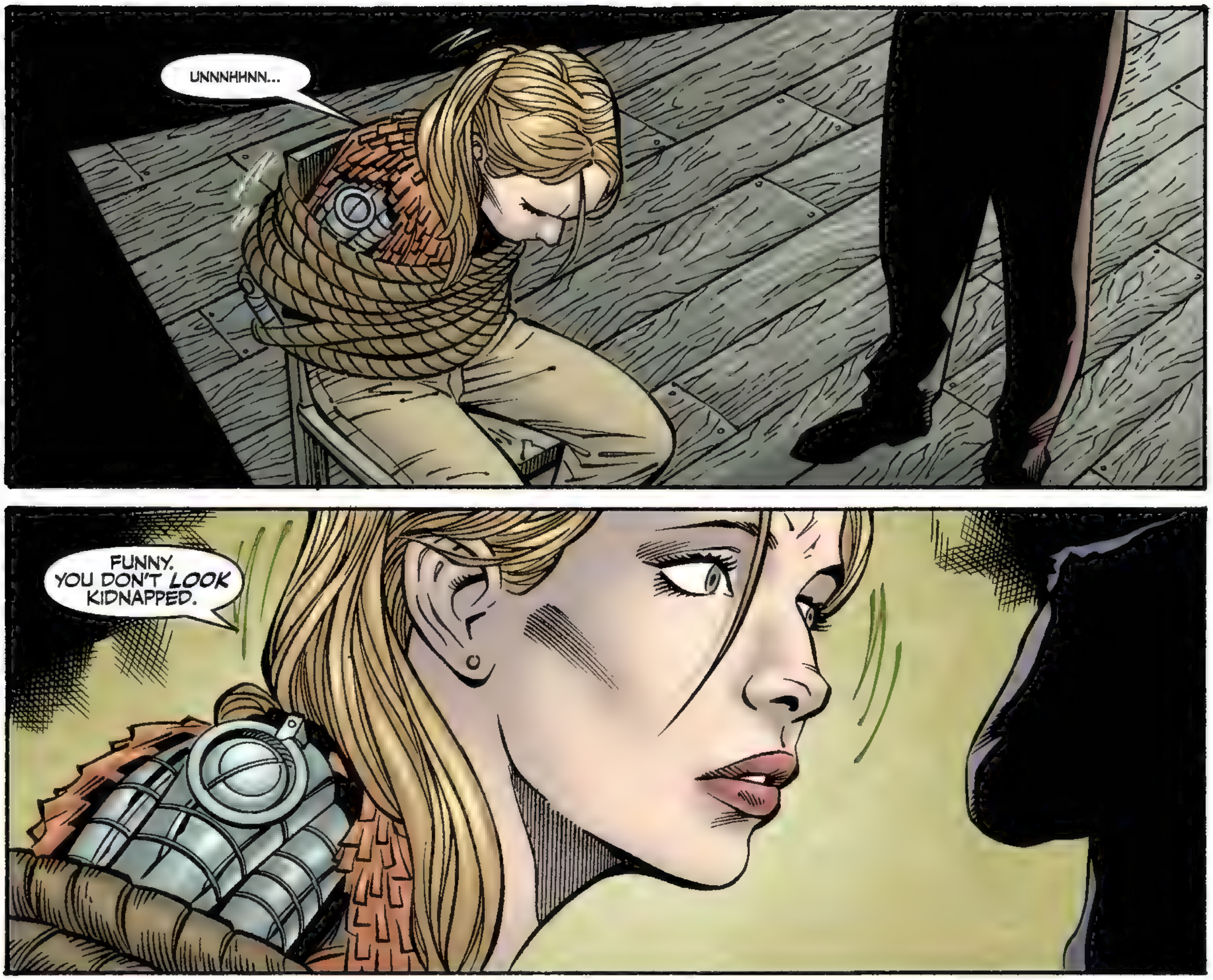
SO WHAT HAPPENED TO HER..?

BAM

NOTHING MUCH.

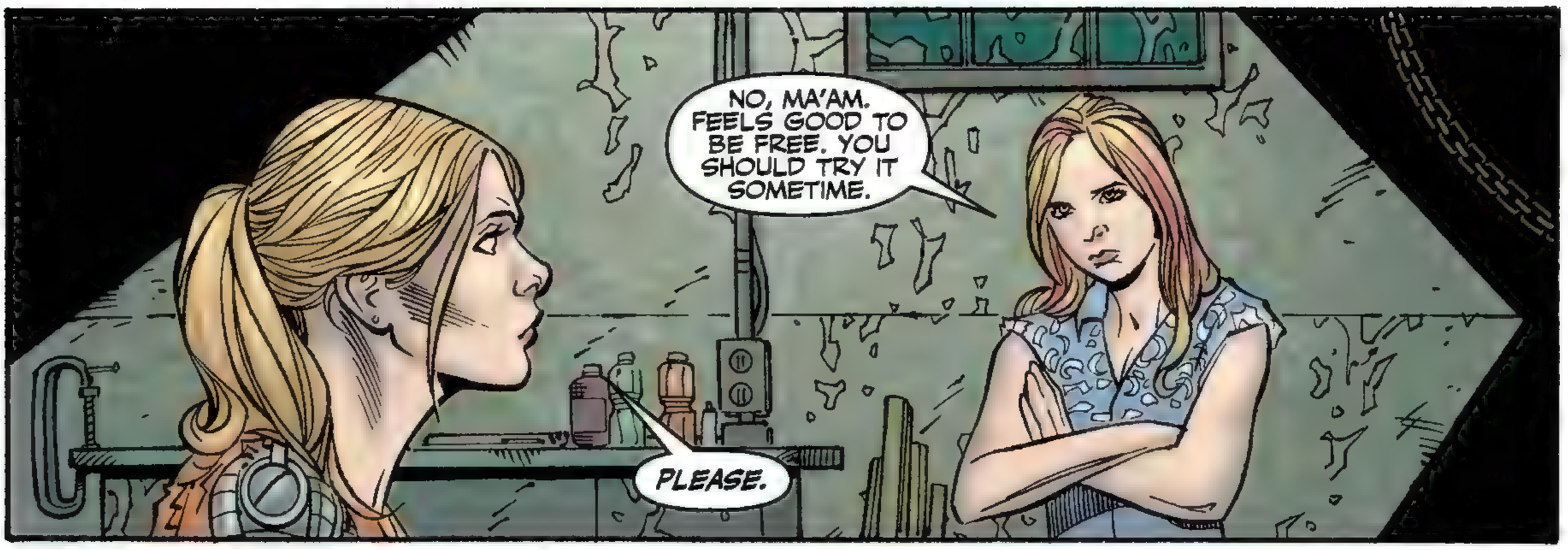
I'VE JUST BEEN LIBERATED.

Why don't you own a car?
You're crashing on a sofa with giant cockroaches
You can't even pour a decent cup of coffee.
You're body.
You don't deserve
Maybe you should drive
Willow away
Willow?
Maybe you should drive Willow away
Why don't you own a car?
You're crashing on a sofa with giant cockroaches
You can't even pour a decent cup of coffee.
You're body.
You don't deserve
Maybe you should drive Willow away
Willow?
Maybe you should drive Willow away



APART (OF ME)

PART THREE



YOU LEFT *THAT* HOUSE SO YOU COULD BE *FREE* IN A BASEMENT THAT SMELLS LIKE BIKE CHAINS?

NO-- THAT ISN'T THE SCENE I SAW IN THAT KITCHEN...

YOU MEAN IN THAT *TRAP* YOU LEFT ME IN? YOU REALLY HAD ME THINKING I WAS ONE OF THEM. THE GILDED YUPPIE CAGE, THE FAKE FRIENDS, THE WHOLE SUBURBAN LIFE--AND LIKE EVERYTHING ELSE WITH YOU, IT WAS *LIES.*

I DON'T KNOW IF I SHOULD BE MORE AMAZED BY HOW COWARDLY YOUR PLAN WAS, OR HOW *STUPID.*

HIDE YOUR MIND IN A FAKE BODY, YOUR BODY IN SUBURBIA...

...WHAT KIND OF GAME ARE YOU *PLAYING?*

IT AIN'T MY GAME, SISTER... BUT YOU FIGURED OUT THE PIECES AND THE BOARD A LOT QUICKER THAN--

--QUICKER THAN YOU THOUGHT?

YOUR PLANS ALWAYS TURN TO CRAP. I DON'T CARE HOW STRONG THAT *TIN CAN* IS--WHATEVER YOU'RE POWERING IT WITH, YOU'RE WELCOME TO IT. YOU DON'T DESERVE TO BE A *SLAYER* ANYMORE.

YOU ARE NOT THE *SLAYER.*

YOU TREATED IT LIKE IT WAS NOTHING. SO IRRESPONSIBLE...

YOU WERE THE ***CHOSEN ONE.*** AND YOU JUST USED THAT POWER TO BUILD ***YOURSELF*** UP--RECRUIT AN ARMY OF FAITHFUL ***DISCIPLES.***

ANDREW ***BETTER*** NOT HAVE PROGRAMMED ANY OF THIS...

I TOLD YOU. I FIGURED OUT THE GAME A LOT QUICKER THAN YOU EXPECTED.

UH, ***I*** SAID THAT.

YOU NEVER ***WANTED*** THEM TO BE STRONG. SO ***YOU*** COULD BE MORE POWERFUL. WHY ELSE WOULD YOU BUILD AN ARMY AND NOT ***ARM*** THEM? ARE YOU ***AFRAID*** OF GUNS?

OH.

AND SUDDENLY THE WARDROBE CHANGE AND THE LITTLE MAGENTA STREAKS BRING TO MIND--

--SIMONE.

SORRY, I ACTUALLY HEARD THE LAST LITTLE BIT OF THAT.

HERE I THOUGHT I WAS UP AGAINST A REAL THREAT.

YOU ***ARE.*** THIS HERE'S THE GREATEST CONCENTRATION OF SLAYER POWER ANYWHERE. STRONGER THAN THE REST OF US. BUT I FIGURED THERE WAS NO WAY I COULD CONVINCE BUFFY SUMMERS TO PLAY ON MY TEAM...

SO *YOU* WERE NICE ENOUGH TO VACATE THE PREMISES! AND GIVE ME A SHOT AT THE *REAL* POWER.

WHATEVER'S POWERING *THIS*, YOU'RE WELCOME TO IT.

SIMONE, AS USUAL YOU GOT JUST ENOUGH OF THE STORY TO CONFUSE YOURSELF.

STOP IT, SUMMERS. YOU'RE NOT A SLAYER--NOT IN THAT BOD.

KNOW WHAT'S FUNNY? I WAS AFRAID TO COME AT YOU.

BUT YOU NERDS WERE RIGHT ABOUT STUDYING THE ENEMY. THAT'S HOW I FIGURED THIS OUT.

WITH YOUR ARMY DEAD, ALL YOU...ALL *BUFFY SUMMERS* HAD THAT I DIDN'T WAS THAT *POWER.*

SO I WENT TO SAN FRAN, ONLY TO FIND... YOUR POWER'S ALL WRONG. IT'S *NOT* SLAYER POWER.

AND IT'S NOTHING LIKE VAMPIRE POWER, EITHER. NOTHING MYSTICAL ABOUT IT.

IF YOU EVER CARED ABOUT BEING A SLAYER, IF YOU EVER MEANT ANY OF THE $%@# YOU LAID ON ALL THOSE GIRLS--

--IF YOU EVER CARED, YOU NEVER WOULD'VE GIVEN IT UP FOR SOME EASY LIFE--

SIMONE, HOW DID YOU KNOW WHAT MY--

SHUT UP!

KRAK

MAN, DOES THAT FEEL GOOD.

YOU *SEE* THIS?

WHATEVER IS IN YOU, YOU AREN'T THE SAME AS SIMONE.

YOU AREN'T *LIKE* HER.

HA HA HA HA!

I REALLY CAN'T TELL YOU HOW MUCH I'M ENJOYING THIS, BUT--

--LOOK WHAT I FOUND UPSTAIRS.

"WE HAVE WORK TO DO."

WELL PAST THE WITCHING HOUR, I FIND MYSELF ALONE IN THE DARK, NEITHER THE ROMANTIC LEAD NOR THE PROVERBIAL "LAST GIRL," BUT RATHER A FORMER VILLAIN CURRENTLY FRIENDLESS, THE WITTY COMIC-RELIEF CHARACTER, ON A COLLISION COURSE WITH--

ANDREW.

MY DEATH!

THE BLOODY HELL WERE YOU GOING ON ABOUT?

JUST WRITING ***SCREAM 5.*** YOU DIDN'T FIND ANY BUFFYS IN THIS BULKHEAD, HUH?

GUNS!

NO, SHE SHOULD HAVE BEEN BACK AT THE CLEARING BY NOW.

I HAD TO DUCK OUT OF THE MORNING GLOW. BUT LOOK.

YEAH, I THINK WE STUMBLED INTO SOMETHING A BIT BIGGER THAN A KIDNAPPING.

NOW, HEADS UP, LAD.

HUH?

"I JUST SAW SOME INTERESTING FOOTAGE FROM INSIDE THAT BAR, DOWLING."

SERGEANT, I KNOW HOW IT LOOKED-- BUT I HAD TO--

OH, NO QUESTION. NO, NO QUESTION AT ALL.

YOU DID WHAT YOU HAD TO DO. I'M IMPRESSED, FRANKLY.

THESE THINGS ARE BECOMING A BIG PROBLEM, DOWLING.

FINALLY TURNING THE TIDE OF PUBLIC OPINION ON THE GODDAMN VAMPIRES.

THE MAYOR'S TALKING TO US ABOUT A NEW TASK FORCE TO DEAL WITH THEM. ABOUT TIME, YOU ASK ME.

NO ANSWER.

Y'KNOW, IT OCCURS TO ME WE'LL NEED SOMEONE TO TAKE POINT...

...YOU GOT ANY IDEAS?

"WHERE'S THIS HEADING, SIMONE?"

WHAT DO YOU THINK YOU GET OUT OF THIS?

WHAT DO I WANT, YOU MEAN?

YOU THINK I'M GONNA EXPLAIN IT ALL, SO YOU CAN MAKE A LAST-MINUTE ESCAPE AND FOIL MY DASTARDLY PLANS?

I'LL DO YOU ONE BETTER.

IF WE CAN ISOLATE THE ESSENCE OF BUFFY SUMMERS IN THIS CHROME DOME--

--WE MIGHT *KEEP* THE HEAD, SO YOU CAN SEE FOR YOUR--

EEEE EEEE EEEE

DAMMIT. STAY HERE.

AND DON'T LISTEN TO HER-- WHATEVER SHE SAYS.

YOU KNOW--

--MAYBE YOU TWO HAVE THE RIGHT IDEA.

LET'S SEE HOW THIS THING COMES APART.

CLICK

CH CHINK

LET ME GUESS--YOU JUST WANT TO TALK.

NOT IF YOU DON'T.

GRRR KRACK RRRRR GRRRRR GRRR

EEEE EEEE EEEEE EEE

EEEE EEEE EEEEE EEEE

KRAK

NO SIGN OF IMMEDIATE DANGER, YOUR MAJESTY!

SHUSH, PAOLO, TRY 'N'--

AH, BETTER. WELL, THEY KNOW WE'RE HERE. BUT EVERYONE LISTEN UP.

MAYBE WE'LL CATCH THE SOUND OF A YOUNG LADY ARGUING WITH HERSELF ABOUT THE BEST WAY TO BREAK A BLOKE'S--

BRAP-AP-AP-AP-AP

PING PING PING PING

OY!

BAM

BRAP-AP-AP-AP-AP

FORGOT THE *CHOSEN ONE* RUNS WITH THE FANGY CROWD--

--OR I'D BE *PACKIN' WOOD!*

PING PING PING

THAT WAY-- NGG!

BOY--FIND BUFFY!

PING PING

BRAP-AP-AP-AP-AP

I'VE *HEARD* OF YOU, DEAR--

PING PING

BRAP-AP-AP-AP-AP

BRAP-AP-

BANG K

LOVE THE LOOK.

ALL HAIL KING SPIKE!

OHMY GODOHMY GODOHMY GOD

HUHN?

CRAP--!

--THEY FOUND THE RELEASE BUTTON ON THE SHOULDER!

I BROUGHT YOU KIND OF INTO THIS WORLD AND I CAN TAKE YOU--

--OWWNF!

KICK HER @$$, BUFFY!

SHE'S BUFFY, ANDREW--AND IF I THOUGHT FOR A SECOND YOU COULD'VE CONNECTED WITH THAT "WARRIORS" BAT--

--I WOULD'VE YANKED *YOUR* ARM OFF. SO--

"--HOW ABOUT WE JUST MAKE HER LISTEN TO REASON?"

THESE BUGS ARE GREAT FUN--

SEBASTIAN!

--BUT SOME OF US STILL LIKE *SLAYING* VAMPS!

SURE-- GOTTA RESPECT TRADITION!

AND HERE I THOUGHT I'D KILLED MY LAST *SLAYER!*

YOU HAVE! BUFFY, TOO!

BLOODY HELL--!

YOUR HIGHNESS!

DID SOMEONE CALL FOR *TWO* BUFFYS?

ANDREW...

LESTER-- WAIT!

SIMONE! YOU'RE THE #@$%IN' LIAR!

BRAP-AP-AP-AP-AP-AP

BRAP-AP

PING

EEP!

SLAYER!

RELAX. YOU'RE IN WORSE SHAPE THAN ME.

ALSO I'M A ROBOT.

NOW WHERE THE BLOODY HELL IS SHE?!

STOP, SPIKE.

WE'RE LUCKY SHE RAN.

JUST GOTTA FIGURE OUT *WHERE.*

SAN FRANCISCO.

SHE HAD THIS WHOLE PLAN INVOLVING BUFFY.

SOMETHING ABOUT TAPPING POWER THAT SHE NEEDED YOU--OR US--FOR.

BUT THERE WAS THIS BACKUP PLAN, WHICH SHE SAID EVEN LESS ABOUT--

"--SOMETHING UP IN THE CITY."

DOWLING. I TOLD YOU TO TAKE THE DAY OFF.

I HAD TO COME IN.

HEY. DOWLING--

--ANY OF THESE MEN OR WOMEN WHO CAN'T LOOK YOU IN THE EYE-- THEY JUST DON'T KNOW IF THEY COULD'VE DONE WHAT YOU DID.

SARGE. STOP.

I MEAN THANKS--BUT I GET IT.

CHEUNG WASN'T MY FAULT. BUT I CAN'T EXPECT THESE GUYS TO UNDERSTAND.

I'M RESIGNING, SIR.

MY OFFICE--C'MON, DOWLING--

I'D RATHER NOT. I'M TIRED. BUT I HAD TO TELL YOU. YOU KNOW ABOUT THE SLAYER. BUFFY.

I'VE SEEN HER IN ACTION. HER AND HER CREW. THAT'S WHAT I NEED TO BE DOING.

OF COURSE WE KNOW ABOUT THE SLAYER, DOWLING...

"...THAT'S WHAT I NEED TO TALK TO YOU ABOUT."

I'M GOING TO BE HERE FIGHTING ALONE.

ACTUALLY, *SHE* IS.

ANDREW WILL GET YOUR BRAIN AND BODY BACK AS ONE. THEN YOU CAN TAKE SOME TIME TO FIGURE OUT WHAT YOU NEED, BUFFY. ME BEING HERE DOESN'T HELP.

DON'T TELL ME WHAT I NEED.

WITHDRAWN.

BUT YOU TELL ME. HOW DO YOU IMAGINE I FELT, WHEN YOU SAID YOU WERE THINKING OF US TWO RUNNING OFF TOGETHER?

COME WITH ME NOW.

YOU'RE RIGHT. THERE'S NO ONE HERE FOR YOU. WHAT DOES THIS TOWN HAVE TO OFFER?

GOING BACK TO SERVING COFFEE, AN AWKWARD CONVERSATION EXPLAINING TO THE LITTLE BIT AND HER BOYFRIEND ABOUT...

...THIS WHOLE...

...THING.

OH NO. I KEEP FORGETTING ABOUT DAWN...

I DON'T WANT TO GO BACK.

TO LURKING AROUND THE EDGE OF YOUR LIFE.

WATCHING FROM THIS FAR ABOVE IT ALL TILL YOU'RE DESPERATE FOR SOMEONE YOU CAN COUNT ON.

SIMONE'S STILL OUT THERE. YOU COULD USE THAT AS AN EXCUSE TO STAY.

THAT IS WHAT I'D USUALLY DO.

YOU KNOW WHAT. FORGET IT, SLAYER.

AND I DON'T MEAN TO SOUND SNAPPISH.

I LOVE YOU.

YOU KNOW THIS.

BUT I CAN'T GET JERKED AROUND NO MORE.

I'M NOT EVEN SAYING I BLAME YOU. I CAN NEVER TELL FOR SURE WHERE YOUR HEART'S AT, SO I'M NOT GONNA STAND HERE UNDER A ROMANTIC, ALBEIT DEADLY, SUNSET LECTURING YOU.

I BELIEVE IN YOU, BUFFY. AND I KNOW YOU'LL DO RIGHT.

THAT'S HOW I HAVE YOUR BACK.

"MAYBE THIS IS A MISTAKE."

"NO, BUFFY, I PROMISE. I CAN MAKE THIS RIGHT."

THAT'S NOT WHAT I MEAN, ANDREW.

SHE HAD HER ACT TOGETHER, RIGHT? HER LIFE WAS WORKING.

MAYBE YOU SHOULD JUST FIX THIS THING UP. I CAN FIGHT VAMPS. YOU CAN BE MY PIT CREW, AND SHE CAN LIVE IN THE HOUSE WITH THE LITTLE WHITE FENCE, FIND THE PERFECT HUSBAND...HAVE THE KIDS...

UH, YOU CAN TELL I'M AWAKE, RIGHT?

SORT OF FIGHTING FOR *YOU* HERE.

BUFFY, SIMONE BRAINWASHED ME, BUT IT WASN'T ALL LIES. THAT ***WAS*** A FAKE LIFE. IT WAS NICE, IT WAS COMFORTABLE FOR SURE, WITH AN IMPECCABLY SAFE SENSE OF STYLE.

HA HA. THANK YOU.

HELLBOY

BUT I COULD TELL SOMETHING WAS WRONG.

I HADN'T EARNED IT. AND I WOULDN'T BE ABLE TO FORGET THAT NOW.

SIMONE WANTED TO MAKE ME A KILLER, A FIGHTER. SHE AWAKENED SOMETHING THAT ANDREW HAD BURIED-- A DRIVE, A FIRE.

THAT'S *YOU*, BUFFY.

I WANT TO GET THIS MIND ALL THE WAY RIGHT AGAIN.

AND THAT MEANS GETTING ALL OF *YOU* BACK IN IT.

SIGH

I'LL NEVER HAVE A LIFE LIKE THAT.

SOOOOO... WE'RE DOING THIS?

BUFFY.

YOU WILL HAVE IT SOMEDAY.

Pick me up

"BUT IT WON'T MEAN ANYTHING UNLESS YOU GET IT FOR YOURSELF.

"ON YOUR TERMS."

I LIKE THE STREAKS.

HUH? OH, DON'T GET USED TO IT.

JUST TRYING STUFF OUT, RIGHT ON.

HEY, I DON'T WANNA BE ALL CORPORATE ON YOU, BUT DISAPPEARING LIKE THAT-- THAT'S A LITTLE UNCOOL.

JODY'S ALWAYS EAGER TO PICK UP EXTRA SHIFTS, SO I WAS ABLE TO COVER YOU. BUT STILL.

NOW, IF YOU'RE BACK, SHOULD I...GET YOU ON THE SCHEDULE? CAN'T USE YOU TODAY, BUT--

OH, HEY...

YOUR FRIEND-- KENNEDY? SHE LEFT THIS. SAID SHE TRIED YOUR CELL, BUT IT GOES STRAIGHT TO VOICE MAIL.

I HAVE HAD THE SAME EXPERIENCE...

MY PHONE TURNED INTO A PAPER-WEIGHT A LITTLE WHILE AGO.

ROOT...YOU SAID YOU DON'T HAVE ME ON THE SCHEDULE, RIGHT?

TRUE.

CONSIDER THIS MY RESIGNATION.

Buffy the Vampire Slayer

SEASON 9 SKETCHBOOK AND COVER GALLERY

Featuring art by GEORGES JEANTY *with*

DEXTER VINES JD METTLER MICHELLE MADSEN STEVE MORRIS JO CHEN

Above: Thumbnail sketches for one of the *Buffy* Season 9 #1 variant covers, celebrating Dark Horse's twenty-fifth anniversary.

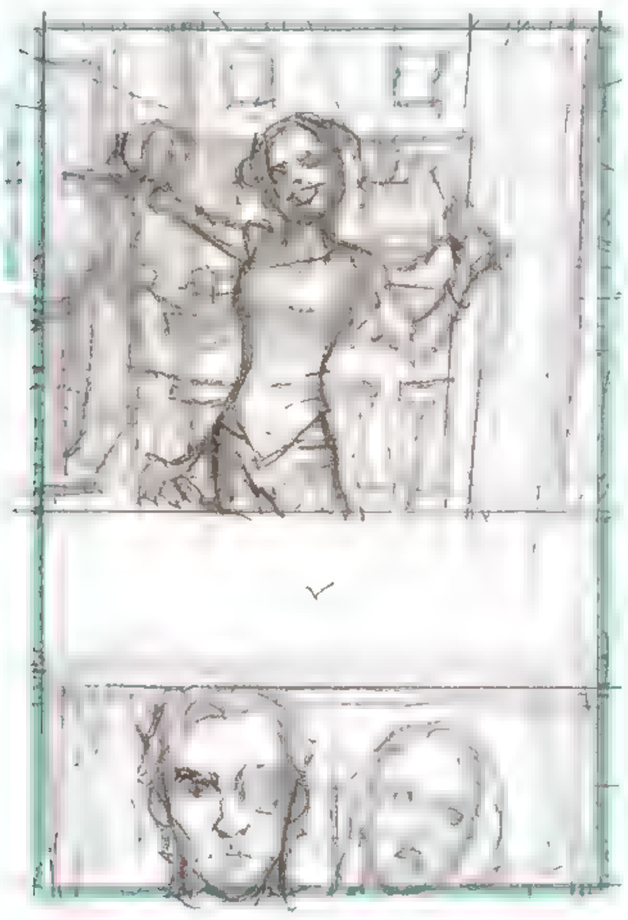
Opposite: The final cover art. Pencils by Georges Jeanty, inks by Dexter Vines, and colors by JD Mettler.

LEONARDO VICI

Script, thumbnails, and rough pencils for the first page and first issue of Season 9. Script by Joss Whedon, pencils by Georges Jeanty.

Georges goes through many steps of sketching and roughing out sequences before he does the final pencils. In the script, Georges uses a highlighter to denote the number of panels per page, the amount of detail per panel, and how much dialogue will have to fit. An incredibly strong visual storyteller, Georges uses methods that make for flawless comics needing very little editorial feedback.

Opposite: Final inks for issue #1, page 1.



BUFFY SEASON NINE, "FREE-FALL" ISSUE 1

PAGE ONE

Panel 1

On Buffy's face, mostly eyes, wincing -- and upside down.

1/BUF (CAP): God...

2/BUF (CONT'D) (CAP): ...what have I done?

Panel 2

Same. Wider, we see she's in bed -- but with her head at the foot. Her clothes are piled on the floor behind her head, which is half off the end. The panel cuts her at the blanket, which (at top of frame) is pulled over her nude bod just enough for modesty. The sunlight is streaming in exactly where her face is, so she holds a hand up to shield it.

3/BUF (CONT'D)(CAP): Also, why did I do whatever it was I've done?

Panel 3

Wider. The room is a mess, with beer bottles and party cups and general after-party aftermath. It's also real small -- the bed is close to a twin. Buffy is trying to think...

4/BUF (CONT'D)(CAP): Also, where am I?

PAGE TWO

Panel 1: Splash panel.

Buffy, clearly the night before, in high spirits, with a beer bottle in hand, She wears a hot -- but boho -- little dress, arms up to show off the place behind her. (We'll discuss anon).

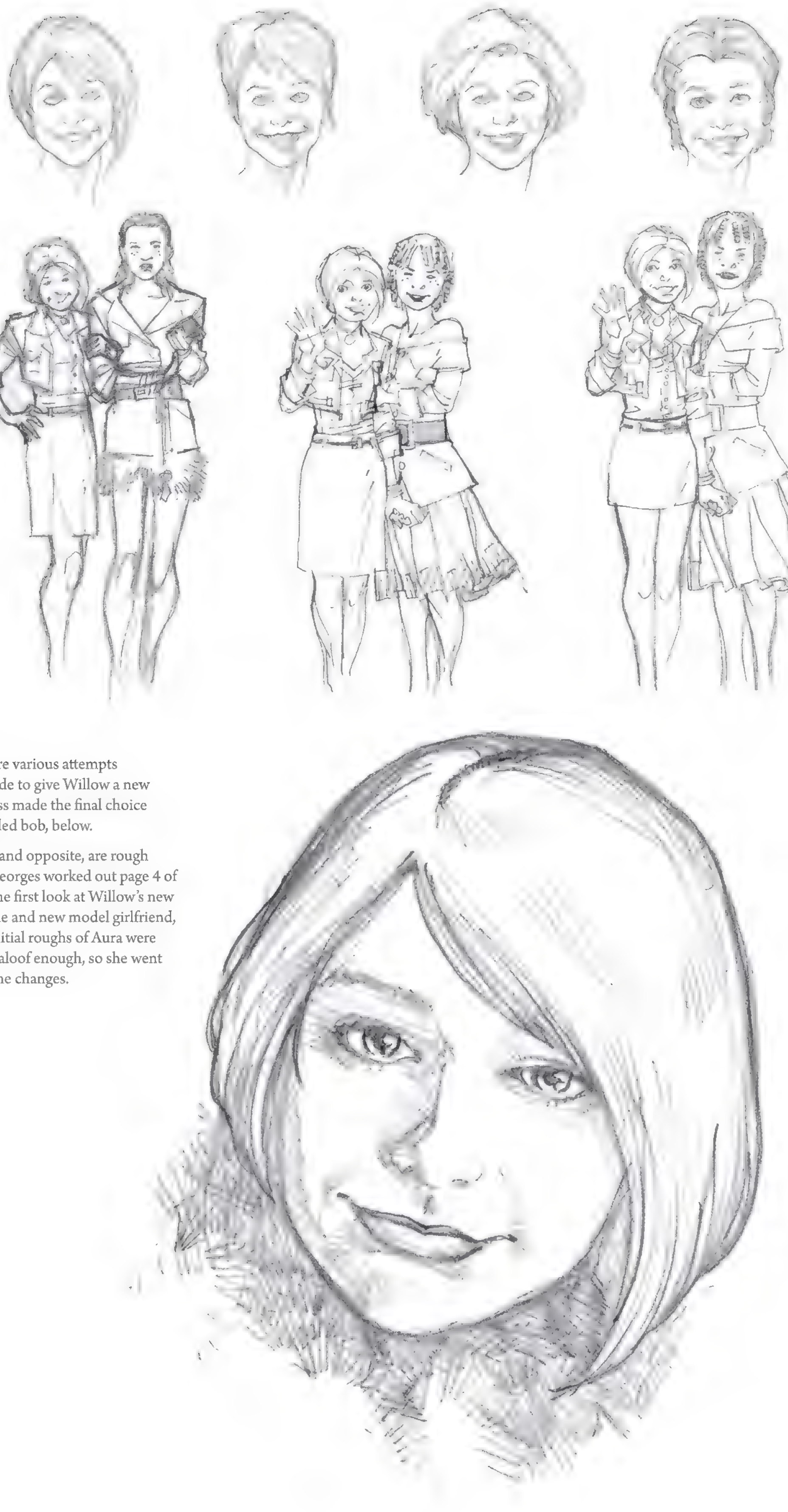
1/BUF (CONT'D): Honey, I'm ho-oome!

Panel 2: title and credits

2/Title: TBD

3/CREDITS

Script – Joss Whedon and Andrew Chambliss
Pencils – Georges Jeanty
Inks – Dexter Vines
Colors – ???????
Letters – Richard Starkings & Comicraft's Jimmy Betancourt



At the top are various attempts Georges made to give Willow a new hairstyle. Joss made the final choice of the lopsided bob, below.

Also above, and opposite, are rough pencils as Georges worked out page 4 of issue #1—the first look at Willow's new clothing style and new model girlfriend, Aura. The initial roughs of Aura were not tall and aloof enough, so she went through some changes.

PAGE FOUR

Panel 1

Vertical. (with three square panels beside and one HZ on the bottom.) Hellooo, Willow. I'm thinking heels, pencil skirt, sharp blouse and short jacket. Hair and lipstick a shade darker, hair a bit shorter. Maybe even lilac instead of red. Maybe even bangs. The look is distinctly new, as is the exotically beautiful black girl arm in arm with her. Her attitude is a little cool, but there's a smile.

1/WILLOW: Oh good.

2/WILLOW (CONT'D): We're not first.

Panel 2

On Buffy, still open mouthed.

3/BUF: Presto change-o.

Panel 3

An upside down, wet-haired Willow is looking down at us. Same size as p2. The sun is flaring behind her (because everything looks bright to hung-over Buffy) This is a much warmer Willow, though not without mischief.

4/WILLOW: Hey cutie.

5/WILLOW (CONT'D): How's it hanging over?

Panel 4

On Buffy's looking confused and alarmed.

6/BUF: Willow? Am I--did we--

7/BUF (CONT'D)(small type): Did we make a naughty?

Panel 5

Buffy struggles to sit up without losing her covers or moving her head. Willow is in her undies and a tank, drying her hair.

8/WILLOW: The most important night of my life and you don't remember.

9/BUF: No, I, do, I...

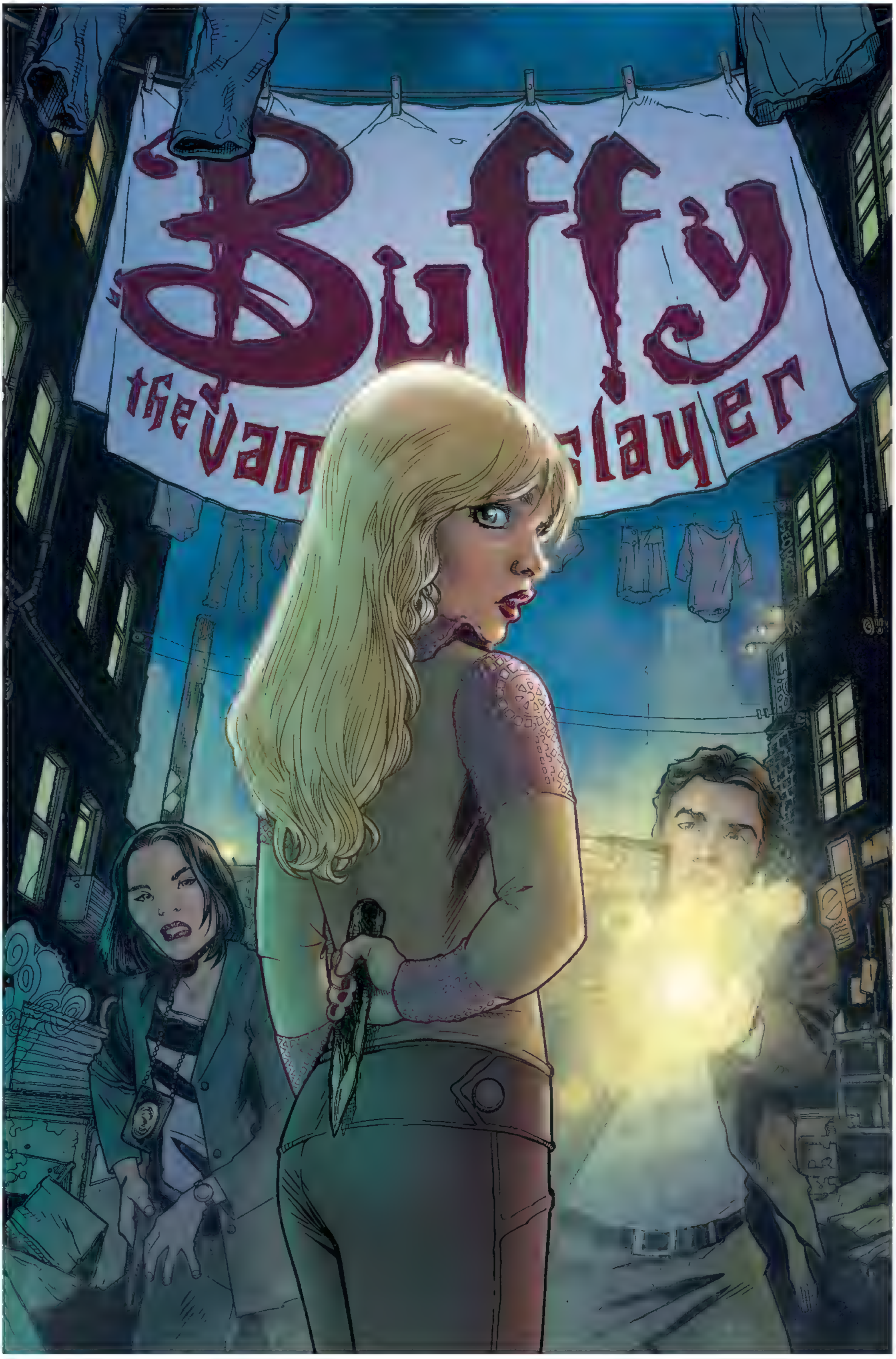
10/WILLOW: Please. I just stopped by to make sure you weren't dead.

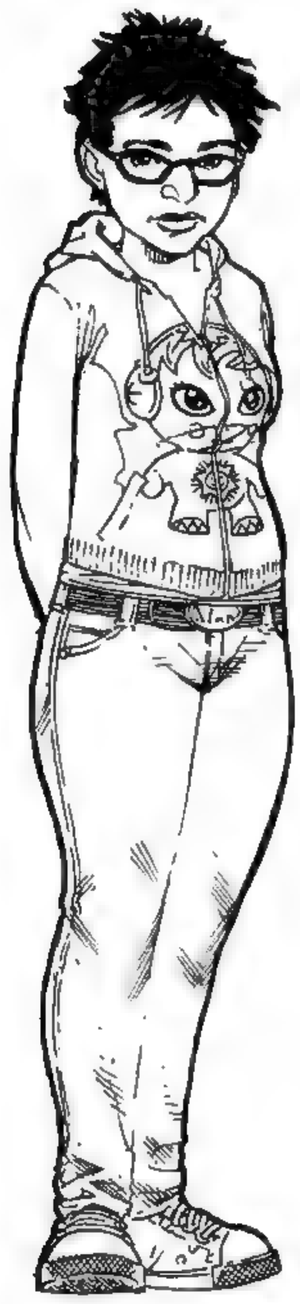
11/WILLOW (CONT'D): And use your shower, 'cause I snuck out on Aura and I'm near work. How are you doing?

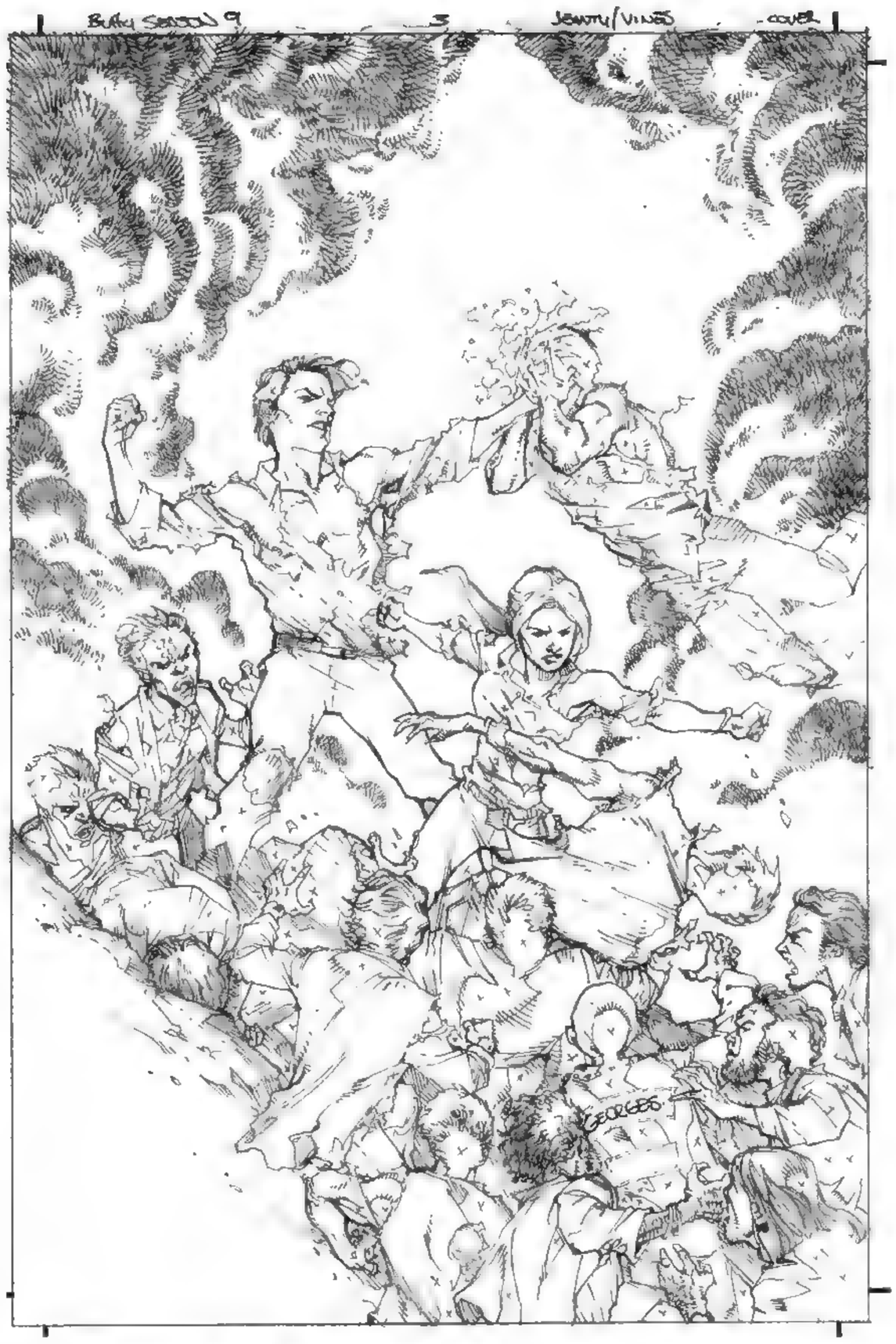
Script, thumbnails, and rough pencils for page 4 of the first issue of Season 9. Script by Joss Whedon, pencils by Georges Jeanty. Again, you can see Georges's methods at work and how Joss works out the details of every scene and characterization in his scripts.

Above: Thumbnail sketches, rough layout, and final pencils for *Buffy* Season 9 #2 variant cover art.

Opposite: Buffy Season 9 #2 final variant cover art. Pencils by Georges Jeanty, inks by Dexter Vines, and colors by JD Mettler.


Buffy
the Van slayer





Top and right: Rough layout, final pencils, and inks for *Buffy* Season 9 #3 variant cover art.

Season 9 introduced readers to a wealth of new characters, including the SFPD detective Dowling, seen in the issue #3 variant cover; Buffy's roommate and secret Slayer Anaheed (*above*); and flashbacks to Nikki's Watcher, Crowley (*near right*).

Opposite: *Buffy* Season 9 #3 final variant cover art. Pencils by Georges Jeanty, inks by Dexter Vines, and colors by JD Mettler.

GEORGES.

Issue #3, pages 9 and 10. Pencils by Georges Jeanty and inks by Dexter Vines.

With the loss of magic in Season 9, vampires went a little haywire. Their connection to the hell dimensions and their demon parts were lost, and zompires were the end result. Think vampires with rabies—uncontrollable, thoughtless, and endlessly hungry.

Opposite, top right: Original Eldre Koh concept design by Joss Whedon.

Headshots and costume design by Georges Jeanty.

Eldre Koh needed to be handsome, someone that Buffy could possibly be attracted to. He also needed to be fierce and mysterious so that you'd question whether he was friend or foe.

ALIOTO'S
MARK
OF
AN FRA

Above: Character studies of Buffy and Spike, from various early issues of Season 9, including issue #7, and *Free Comic Book Day* 2012.

Previous page: *Buffy* Season 9 #4 final variant cover art. Pencils by Georges Jeanty, inks by Dexter Vines, and colors by Dave Stewart.

Above: Rough layout, final pencils, and inks for *Buffy* Season 9 #5 variant cover art.

Opposite: *Buffy* Season 9 #5 final variant cover art. Pencils by Georges Jeanty, inks by Dexter Vines, and colors by Michelle Madsen.

Coming out of Season 8, Buffy and Willow's friendship was strained. Season 9 focuses on bringing everyone back together again after suffering two great losses—those of Giles and magic.

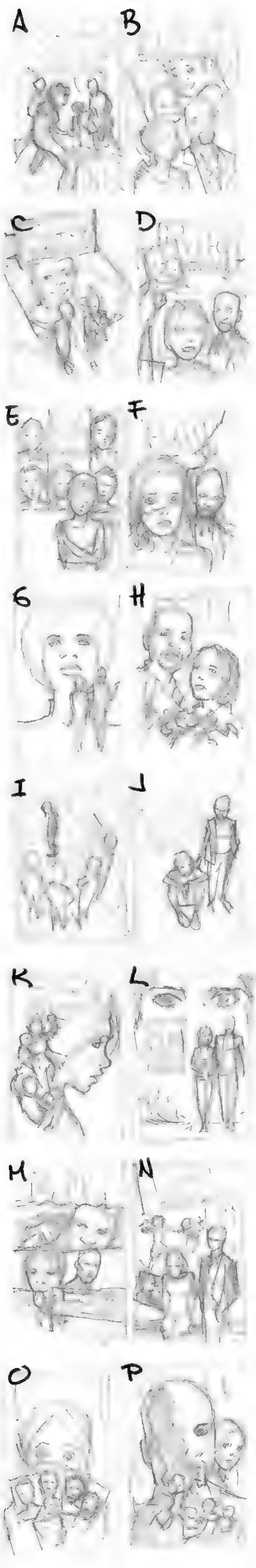
A STUDIO REVOLVER JOINT.

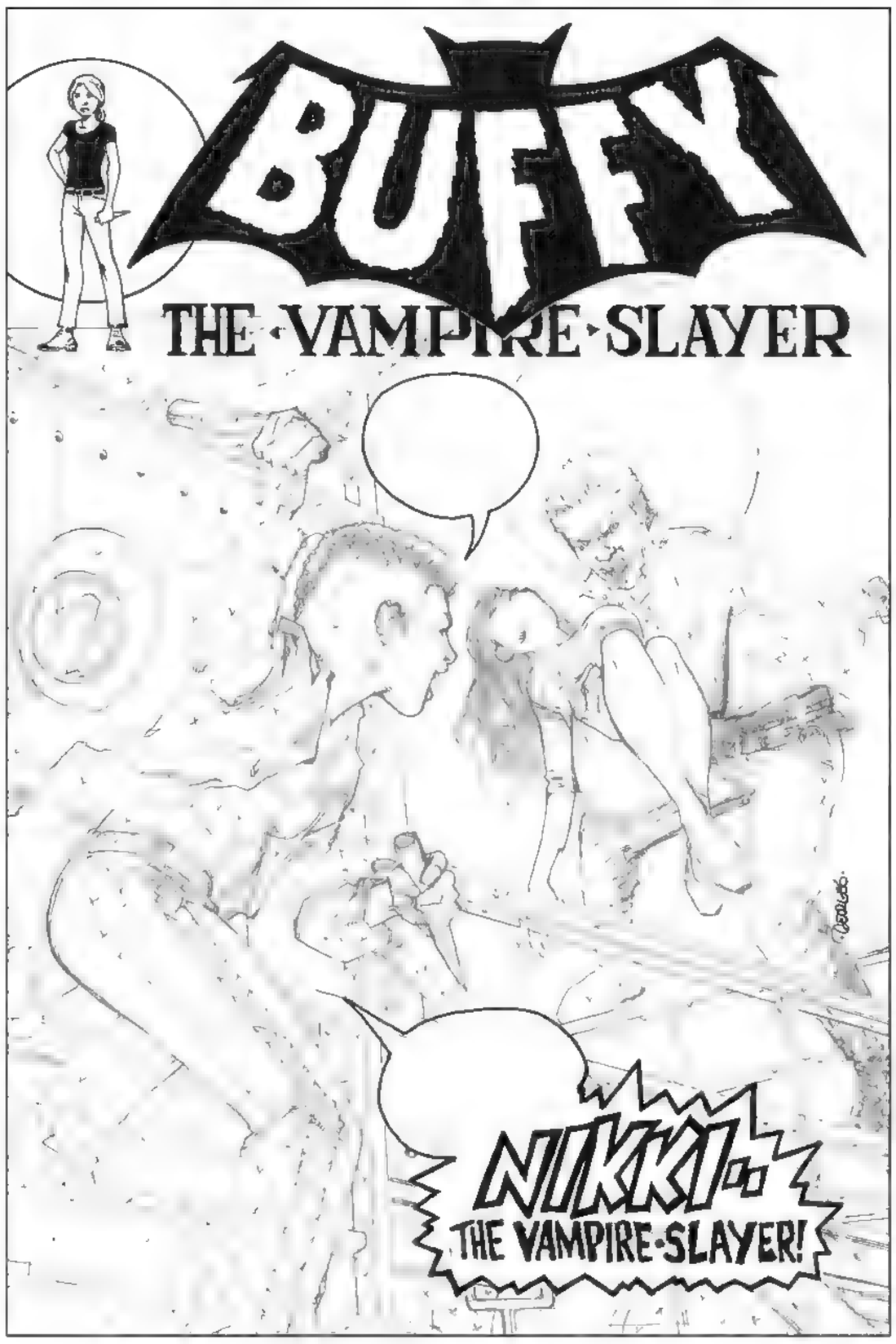
Previous pages: Buffy Season 9 #1 variant cover art and *Buffy* Season 9 Volume 1: *Freefall* cover art, both by Jo Chen.

Right: Thumbnail sketches, final pencils, and final inks for *Buffy* Season 9 #6 variant cover art.

Opposite: *Buffy* Season 9 #6 final variant cover art. Pencils by Georges Jeanty, inks by Dexter Vines, and colors by Michelle Madsen.

This particular cover pays homage to the 1973 *The Tomb of Dracula* #10 comic cover by Gil Kane. It also reintroduces *Buffy* readers to Nikki, the Slayer that Spike infamously killed in the eighties, leaving her son, Robin Wood, an orphan.





BUFFY

THE VAMPIRE-SLAYER

DROP THE GIRL, BLONDIE, OR THIS STAKE WILL FINISH YOU OFF-- *FOREVER!*

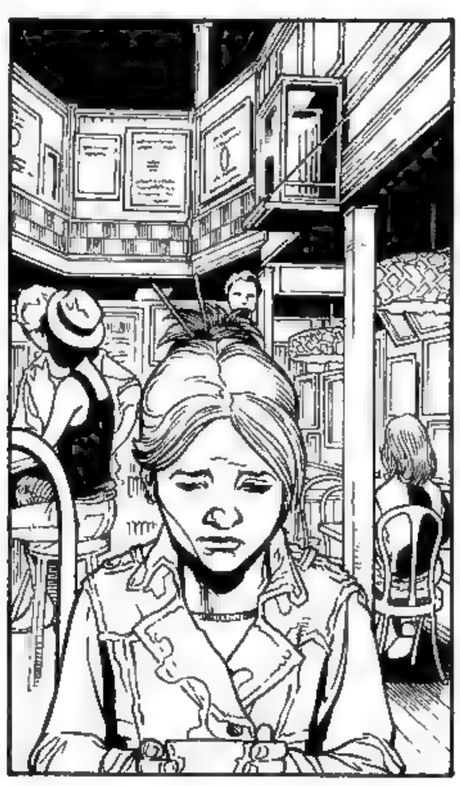
MAYBE YOU'RE HOT STUFF BACK IN ENGLAND, BUT NOBODY MESSES AROUND WITH--

NIKKI...

THE VAMPIRE-SLAYER!

Issue #7, page 11. Pencils by Georges Jeanty and inks by Dexter Vines.

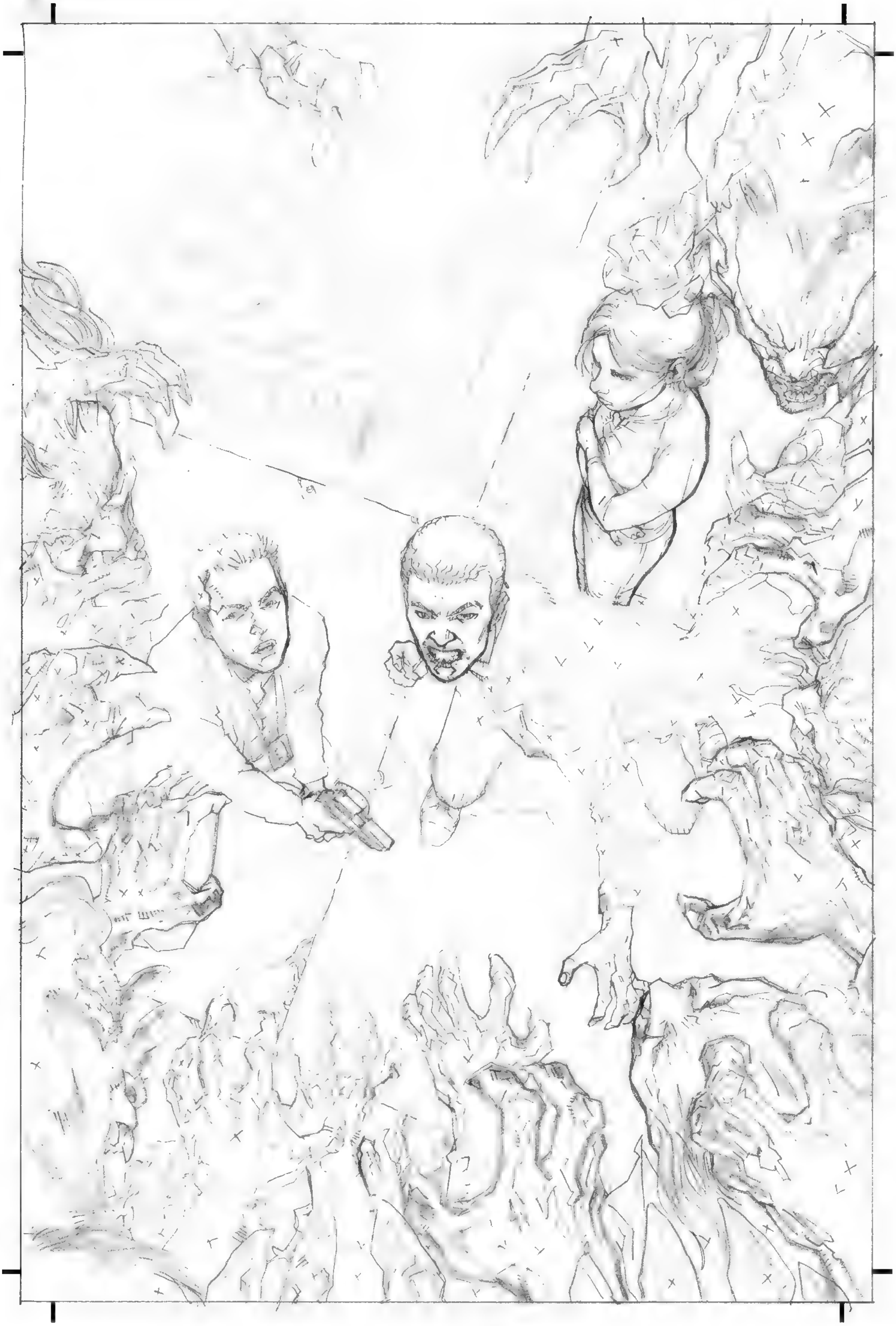
Exploring Nikki Wood's past and revisiting Robin Wood were highlights of Season 9, especially in how this pertained to the possibility of Buffy starting a family of her own.

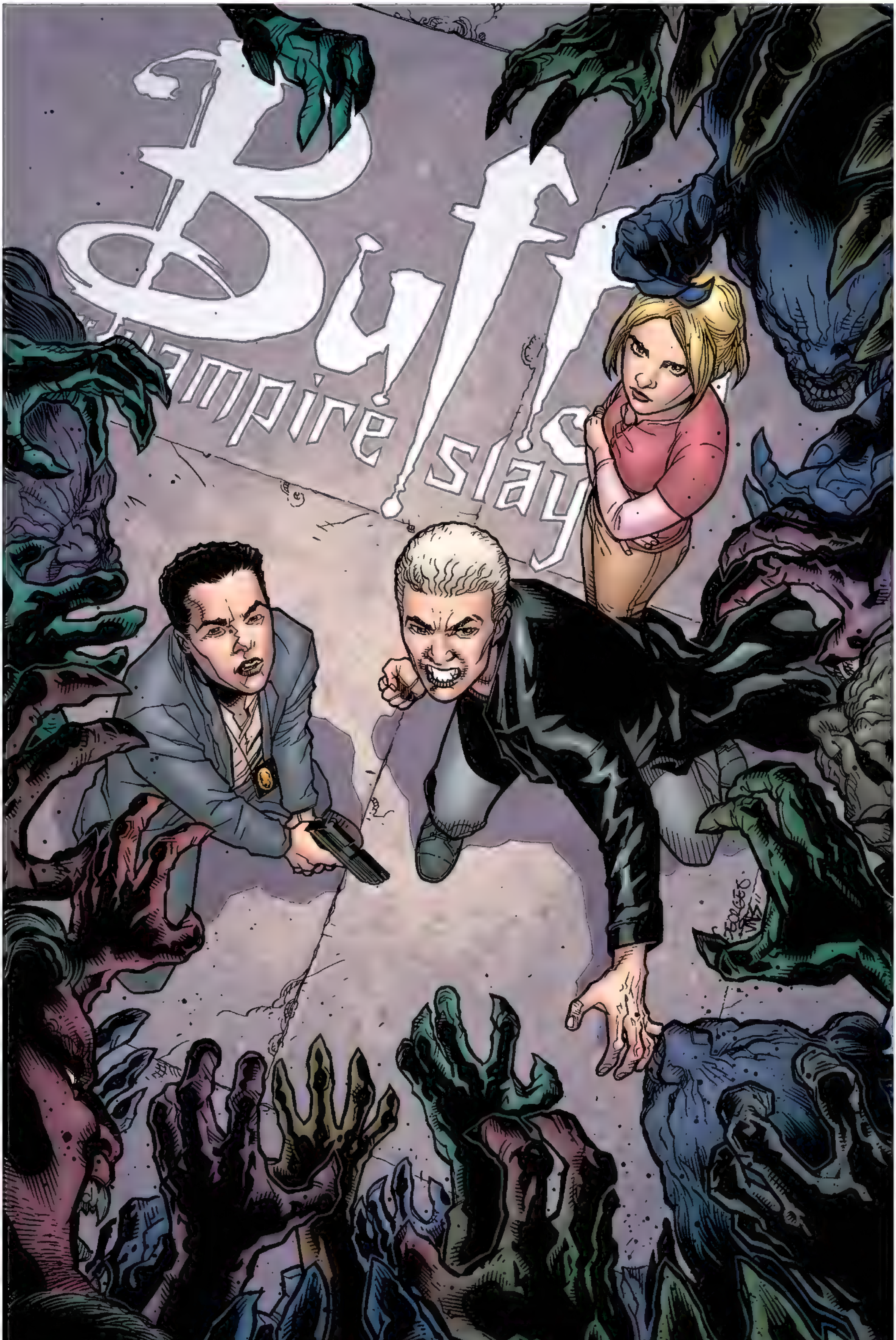


Issue #7, page 12. Pencils by Georges Jeanty and inks by Dexter Vines.

Georges has always been creative with his layouts and overall storytelling. The action pops from the pages. This Spike sequence is no exception.

Following pages: Not-quite-final pencils for the *Buffy* Season 9 #7 variant cover and the final colored cover. Pencils by Georges Jeanty, inks by Dexter Vines, and colors by Michelle Madsen.



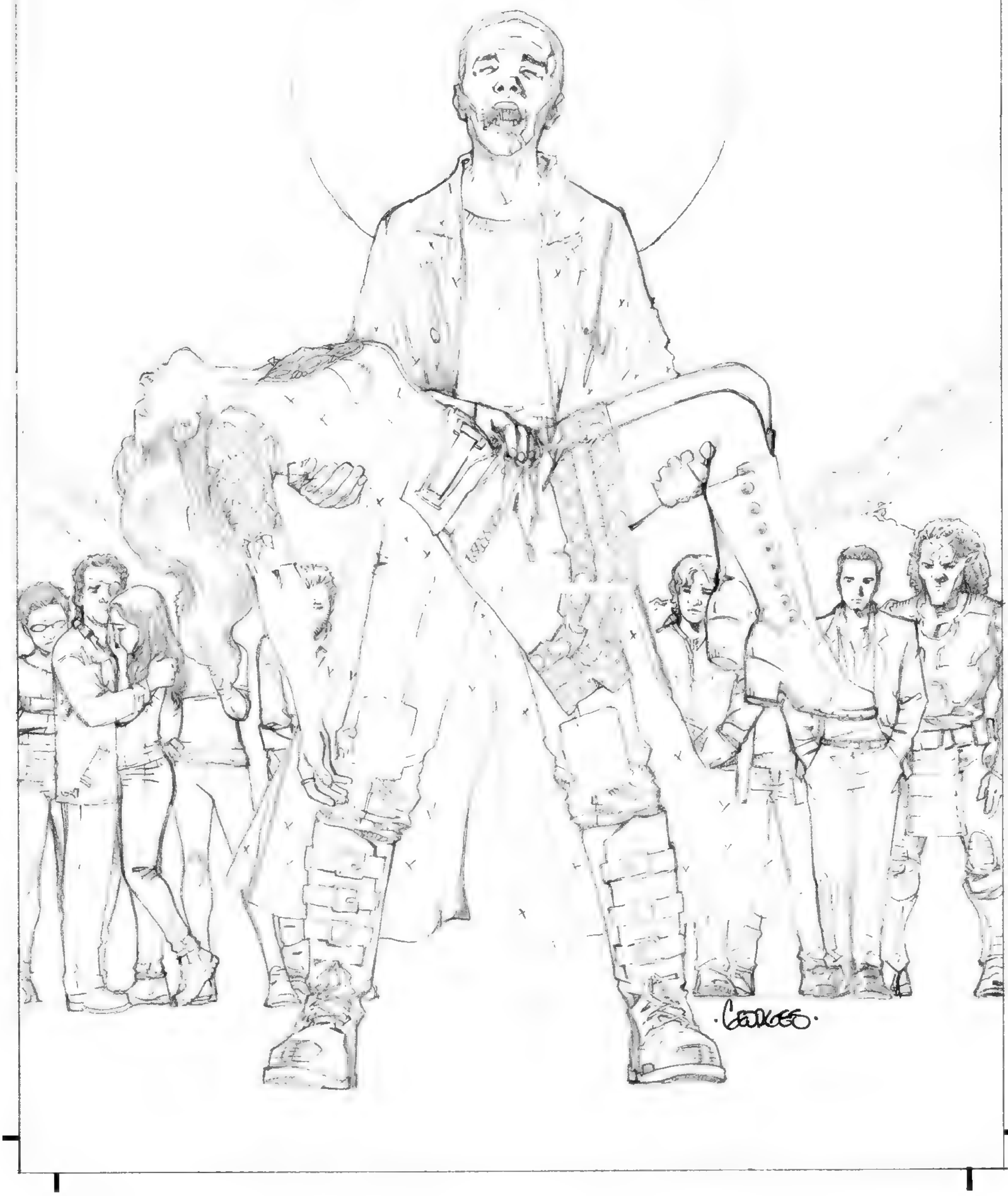

Vampire slay

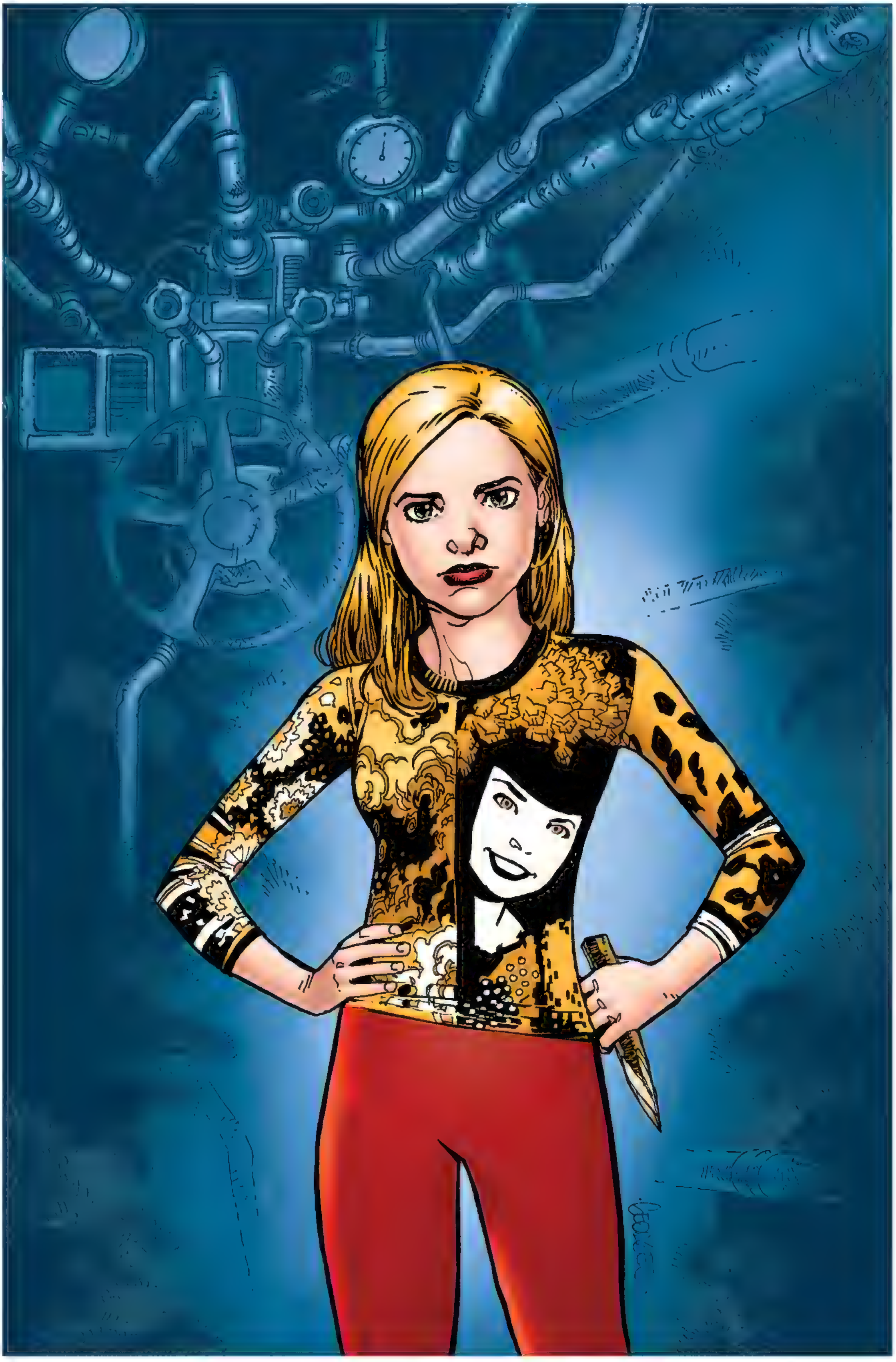
On this page and the opposite page are the solicitation "fake out" cover art and the final cover art for the *Buffy* Season 9 #8 variant, where it is revealed that Buffy was inhabiting a robot body. Pencils by Georges Jeanty, inks by Dexter Vines, and colors by Michelle Madsen.

Final pencils for *Buffy* Season 9 #10 variant cover art.

Opposite: Buffy Season 9 #10 final variant cover art. Pencils by Georges Jeanty, inks by Dexter Vines, and colors by Michelle Madsen.

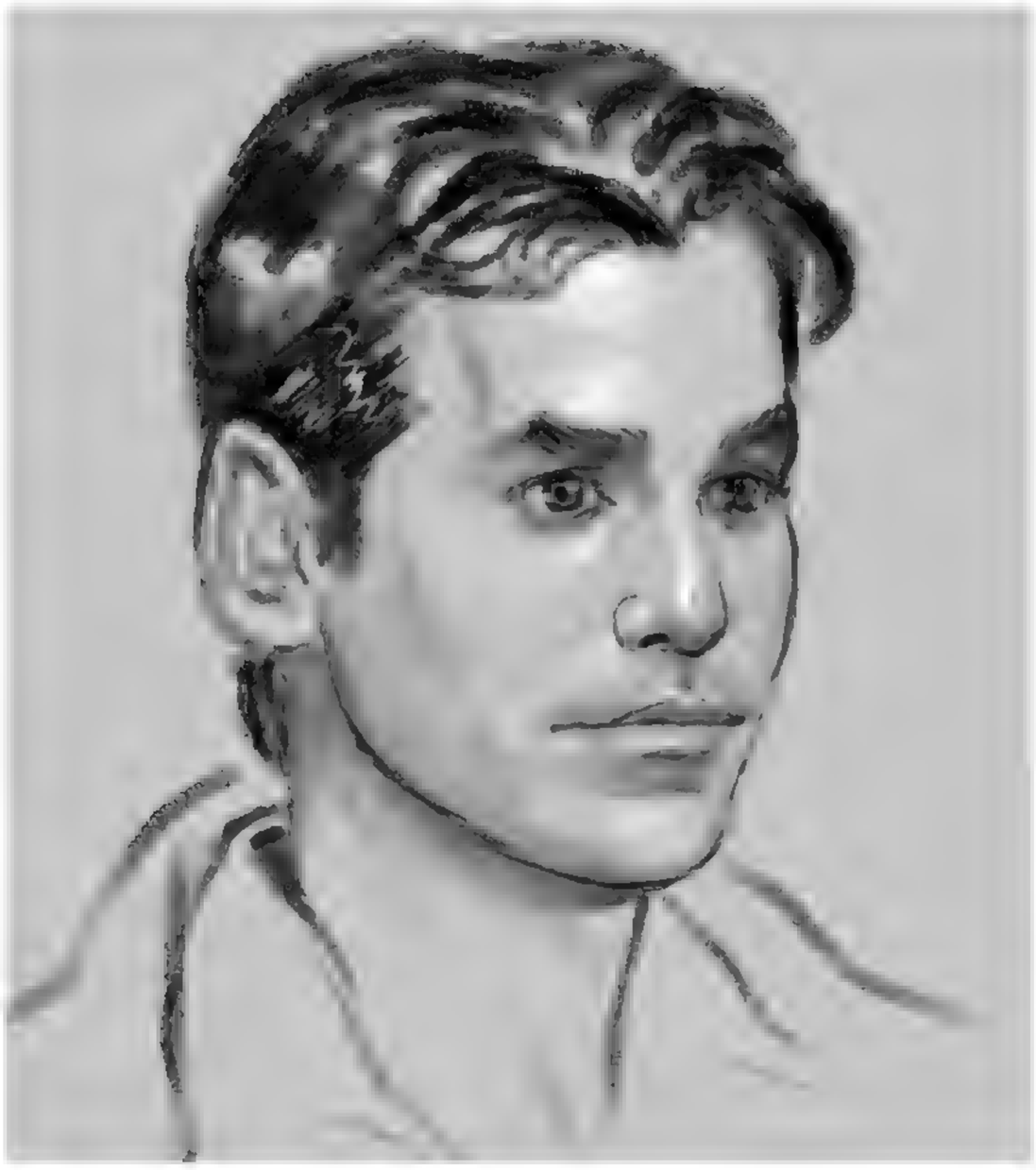
Another homage cover, this one references the 1985 cover of *Crisis on Infinite Earths* #7 depicting the death of Supergirl, drawn by George Pérez.





Previous pages: Buffy Season 9 #9 variant cover art. Pencils by Georges Jeanty, inks by Dexter Vines, and colors by Michelle Madsen. *Free Comic Book Day* 2012 cover art. Pencils and inks by Georges Jeanty and colors by Michelle Madsen.

This page and opposite: Cover artist Steve Morris's likeness tryouts for the characters of the Buffyverse.



Following page: Buffy Season 9 Volume 2: *On Your Own* cover art, by Jo Chen.

CREATOR BIOGRAPHIES

Writer, producer, and director JOSS WHEDON began writing feature films and acting as a "script doctor" in the 1990s. He introduced the character for which he is most well known in his script for the original *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* film (1992).

In 1997 Whedon founded Mutant Enemy Productions so that he could coproduce the television series *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*. The series ran from 1997 to 2003, giving birth to Whedon's cultlike fan following, and led to a spinoff series, *Angel*, as well as comics series based on both shows. In 2002, Whedon produced and wrote the television series *Firefly*, which eventually led to a feature film titled *Serenity* (2005), as well as more comics. In 2008, Whedon produced and cowrote, with his brothers Zack and Jed Whedon, and Maurissa Tancharoen, the Emmy-winning online series *Dr. Horrible's Sing-Along Blog*—again leading to a comics series. His most recently produced television work, *Dollhouse*, created with Jed Whedon and Tancharoen, premiered in 2009. He wrote and directed one of the most ambitious and successful feature films to date: *The Avengers*, based on the Marvel Comics superhero team, and is currently at work on the sequel, *Avengers: Age of Ultron*. He also directed, produced, and composed original music for a film adaptation of the Shakespeare play *Much Ado about Nothing*.

Comics written by Whedon include *Fray* and *Buffy* Seasons 8 and 9, both series based in the *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* universe, and *Sugarshock*, all for Dark Horse Comics, and *Runaways* and *Astonishing X-Men* for Marvel Comics.

Writer and producer ANDREW CHAMBLISS began his career as an assistant to the executive producers of the television series *Crossing Jordan* and *Heroes*, after which he worked as a story editor on the short-lived remake of *The Bionic Woman*. In 2011 he joined the writing staff of *Dollhouse* and continued as a writer and story editor, scripting the series finale, "Epitaph Two: Return," as well as cowriting the comic-book series with Jed Whedon and Maurissa Tancharoen at Dark Horse Comics. He has also written for *Spartacus: Blood and Sand* and *The Vampire Diaries*, and currently works on the staff of *Once upon a Time* as a writer and coproducer. Chambliss was the primary writer for Season 9 of the *Buffy* comics series and has stated that *Buffy* was instrumental in making him want to become a writer.

SCOTT ALLIE is the editor in chief of Dark Horse Comics, where he's edited Joss Whedon and Mike Mignola's comics, among others, since 1994. Other editorial credits include Gerard Way's *The Umbrella Academy*, Eric Powell's *The Goon*, Greg Rucka's *Veil*, and most recently Chuck Palahniuk's *Fight Club 2*. Before working at Dark Horse he self-published a series of horror comics called *Sick Smiles*, and worked as an assistant editor for the literary magazine *Glimmer Train Stories*, for which he still freelances. He cowrites the monthly *Hellboy* spinoff *Abe Sapien* with Mike Mignola, and has past writing credits on other Mignola and Whedon titles, as well as *Star Wars*, *Solomon Kane*, and his original stories *The Devil's Footprints* and *Exurbia*.

Best known as a writer and producer for a variety of science-fiction television series, JANE ESPENSON first attempted to enter the field by submitting several spec scripts to *Star Trek: The Next Generation* while she was a graduate student at University of California–Berkeley. In 1992 she was given a spot in the Disney Writing Fellowship, which led to work on ABC's *Dinosaurs* and Touchstone Television's *Monty*. From there, in 1997, she became a writer and producer for the sitcom *Ellen*. A year later, Espenson applied for a position on *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, and became executive story editor in the show's third season. Espenson remained with the show through its final (seventh) season. She wrote or cowrote twenty-three episodes; "Conversations with Dead People," cowritten with Drew Goddard, won a 2003 Hugo Award. *Buffy* also brought Espenson to the comics world. She wrote several stories for Dark Horse Comics' *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* series and the related comics *Tales of the Slayers* and *Tales of the Vampires*. After *Buffy*, Espenson wrote and produced for a variety of TV series, including *Firefly*, *The O.C.*, *Gilmore Girls*, *Tru Calling*, and *Jake in Progress*, before joining the staff of Syfy's *Battlestar Galactica* remake in its fourth season as co-executive producer. She remained with the series through the remainder of its episodes and two television movies, and then took on executive producer duties for the spinoff, *Caprica*. While working on *Battlestar*, Joss Whedon's *Dollhouse*, *Caprica*, and other series, she returned to the world of comics with *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* Season 8. In 2011, Espenson joined ABC's new series *Once upon a Time* as consulting producer and writer, and is

still currently with the program. Also in 2011, Espenson launched her first independent web series, with cocreator Brad Bell, *Husbands*. The critically acclaimed and award-winning series has run for two seasons, and led to the creation of an inventive six-part comics series written by Espenson and Bell and published by Dark Horse.

Buffy the Vampire Slayer Season 8 and Season 9 series artist GEORGES JEANTY studied fine arts at Miami Dade University; the pursuit of a career in comics was a logical choice for his artistic talents. In 1993 he broke into the world of comics with *Paradigm* #1 from Caliber Comics, and soon was penciling for London Night Studios. Moving to Atlanta, Georgia, in 1994, Jeanty joined Gaijin Studios and began to work regularly for DC Comics on titles such as *Green Lantern*, *Superboy*, and *Superman*. His first ongoing series came in 1999 with Marvel Comics' *Bishop: The Last X-Man*, and was followed by work on *Gambit*, *Deadpool*, and *Weapon X*. In 2003, Jeanty left Gaijin Studios and formed Studio Revolver with fellow artists Dexter Vines, Tom Feister, and Tariq Hassan. The year 2006 brought Jeanty the critically acclaimed comics miniseries *The American Way*, a controversial sixties-era series written by screenwriter John Ridley and released through WildStorm. Soon after the success of *The American Way*, Jeanty was approached by Dark Horse Comics to be the regular series artist for *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* Season 8—for which he had been handpicked by Joss Whedon. Georges Jeanty's run as the artist for Season 8 was critically acclaimed, and the series received the 2008 Eisner Award for Best New Series. Jeanty continued as the regular series artist for *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* Season 9, and recently was the artist for the series *Serenity: Firefly Class 03-K64—Leaves on the Wind*.

Best known for his work in the *Buffy* universe, comic artist KARL MOLINE's first project with series creator Joss Whedon was the 2003 miniseries *Fray*, from Dark Horse Comics, set in the future of Buffy's world. With the canonical return of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* in comics with Season 8, Moline was again brought in to draw a *Buffy/Fray* crossover arc in issues #16–#19, as well as a Season 8 *Willow* one-shot, a *Riley* one-shot, and single issues in *Buffy* Seasons 9 and 10. His other work for Dark Horse includes a *B.P.R.D.: War on Frogs* one-shot in 2008 and the miniseries *B.P.R.D.: The Dead Remembered* in 2011. Moline has also done work for other comics publishers, such as Marvel Comics (including *Avengers Academy*, *The Loners: The Secret Lives of Super Heroes*, *Spider-Man Unlimited*, *X-Factor*, and *X-Men*).

Brazilian artist CLIFF RICHARDS is best known for his work on the original Dark Horse *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* comics series that ran from 1998 to 2003, while the television series was still on the air. Over the years, Richards has also drawn for DC Comics' *Birds of Prey* and *Wonder Woman*, and for Marvel Comics' *Rogue*, *Excalibur*, and *New Thunderbolts*, among many other titles. Most recently, Richards was the artist for the comics series *Dollhouse*, a five-issue supplement to the television series from creator Joss Whedon, as well as various issues of *Buffy* Season 9 and Season 10, and the graphic novel adaptation of the novel *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies*.

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This volume reprints *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* Season 9 #1–#10, "Buffy the Vampire Slayer: Magical Mystery Tour Featuring the Beetles" from Dark Horse Digital, and "Buffy the Vampire Slayer: In Space No One Can Hear You Slay" from *Free Comic Book Day 2012*.

This story takes place after the events of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* Season 8, created by Joss Whedon.

Special thanks to Lauren Winarski and Josh Izzo at Twentieth Century Fox, Debbie Olshan, and Daniel Kaminsky.

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SEASON 9 VOLUME 1

THE WORLD'S CONNECTION TO MAGIC HAS BEEN LOST, AND BUFFY IS TO BLAME.

Following the tragic events of Season 8—where one of Buffy's closest allies was lost, and another estranged—the Slayer finds herself in a new city struggling like any twenty-something might to pay rent, make (and keep) friends, and atone for all her misdeeds.

Problems plague the Slayer, and she turns to a longtime confidant, Spike, for help when she's forced to make a choice that could forever alter the course of her life. Together they tackle the increasing zompire population, their misguided friend Andrew, a rogue Slayer out for blood, and finally, Buffy's continually complicated and more-dangerous-than-ever personal life.

Welcome to San Francisco, home of the Golden Gate Bridge and Alcatraz, where Buffy finds herself more alone than she's ever been and more important than ever in the fight against the forces of evil!

"Even if Buffy's life has gotten much smaller, the world remains a big place, and it's always spinning forward . . . As any *Buffy* fan knows, the woman is plenty captivating just on her own."

—*ENTERTAINMENT WEEKLY*

"Joss Whedon has managed the impossible yet again, somehow reinventing and reinvigorating these beloved characters and putting them on entirely new paths and adventures. I cannot wait to see where Whedon is taking us this time."

—COMIC BOOK RESOURCES

DARK HORSE BOOKS

COMICS & GRAPHIC NOVELS / HORROR

JOSS WHEDON
ANDREW CHAMBLISS
GEORGES JEANTY

Buffy the Vampire Slayer™

SEASON 9 VOLUME 1

SCOTT ALLIE
JANE ESPENSON
KARL MOLINE
CLIFF RICHARDS

"BUFFY IS BACK, AND BETTER THAN EVER!"

—MTV GEEK

The world has lost its connection to magic, thanks to Buffy's choices at the end of Season 8, and there are growing pains all around. Having relocated to San Francisco, Buffy discovers a new breed of troubles—zompires, a magical siphon, a sullen Wiccan best friend, and, along with her other twenty-something-type ordeals, a pesky student loan. Then, when Willow goes walkabout, Buffy is suddenly dealing with a pregnancy, body snatching, robots, and a rogue Slayer—all while coming to terms with her relationship with Spike.

Written by Joss Whedon and Andrew Chambliss (*Once upon a Time, Dollhouse*), with art by Georges Jeanty, Cliff Richards, and Karl Moline, this library edition contains the first two complete story arcs of Season 9 as well as two one-shot stories and an expanded sketchbook section from series artist Georges Jeanty.

"This is a comic that makes me proud to be a fan of the character and the Buffyverse at large . . . We're in for a run of powerful stories, indeed."

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